GURU IN THE JUNGLE

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Prologue

I am blind, therefore I see.

Chapter 1 - The Monkey Wrench

While lounging in his hammock, soaking up the sun and sipping a banana martini, Max's cell phone belted out that old Monkeys tune, "I'm a Believer." This reminded Max the monkey of his old seeing days in the band. Those were the best days of an ill

spent youth. But like most monkeys, Max grew up, got an education, moved to the big jungle, had a family, and enjoyed a successful career. The only difference was Max did it while going blind.

Max the monkey used his tail to find his singing cell phone. He grabbed it and answered, “Max here.”

“Max, its Leo. I need your help again. Same old routine as last time. But this time its Jungle Tech. You go in and work with the executive team, and get them on track. You’re my monkey wrench. When I throw you in, things always get fixed up.”

“Leo, for you, anything,” Max admitted with a huge smile. “You’re the only one that can talk me out of this paradise.”

“Great! This Jungle Tech team needs a lot of help. If anyone can turn them around, the Dream Guru can. Be in my den tomorrow morning at first light, and I’ll get you up to speed.”

Leo the lion sat as the Chairman of the Board of Jungle Tech Incorporated. He used Max the monkey on numerous occasions to go in and work with the executive teams of one of his many companies.

Jungle Tech wasn’t firing on all cylinders. Leo couldn’t put his paw on the problem. He’d a highly regarded president running the show. Tag the tiger rated as a true hunter. Leo brought Tag in two years ago. Tag and his team spent a fortune on consultants putting together a Strategic Business Plan. Leo groaned, knowing how little Jungle Tech moved on that expensive plan.

Leo liked Tag, and the tiger acquired a piece of Jungle Tech when he joined. Tag received 3%, but for some perceived tax benefit the shares were in Tag’s wife’s name, Tanya the tigress. This was, of course, simply a formality, and Tanya followed along famously.

Tag should have a strong leadership team surrounding him Leo thought. Except, both Tag and that team drove Leo to paw the earth. There should be no reason that Jungle Tech stagnated in this

burgeoning high tech market. That was why Leo called in Max. That blind monkey seemed to see what others didn't.

Max gave Leo the straight goods. He used that DREAM model to coach the key players. For Leo knew that some of the executives had personal issues holding them back, some had professional issues holding them back, some had attitudes and other agendas holding them back; all of these holding Jungle Tech back.

All Leo thirsted for was the straight goods, no MBA speak. Leo took pride in being a simple and straight forward lion. He worked his way up the hard way. He was street smart, smooth talker with the customers and always thinking two steps ahead of the market. Leo wanted Max to discover the real Jungle Tech and its executive team, helping them attain new heights. Leo knew that that quiet monkey could shake up the jungle even more than when Leo the lion went on a roaring rampage.

Chapter 2 - The Lion's Den

Max shuffled into Leo the lion's den at first light. Leo watched Max enter, swishing his white cane back and forth. Max attempted to locate the chair across from Leo's desk. Max plunked himself down. "Leo, it's great to be back with you!"

"You old monkey, I move that chair each time you enter my den. You always find it in seconds." Leo took a puff of his cigar.

"Know you do Leo. That's half the fun, trying to guess where you're going to move it. One of these days you're going to fool me and leave it in the same spot. Hey, you've changed your brand of cigars."

“No fooling that nose of yours Max. Gone Cuban. These are damn good! Still don’t got a non-smoking policy in my den. Guess I should.”

“Probably time. But you’d never follow it.” Both had a chuckle.

Leo lowered his voice as he said, “Okay half pint, let’s get down to business. I’m turning off my cell. So we can really talk. Jungle Tech’s in a hot market. Got capital behind it. Supposed to have the best and brightest running it. Yet we’re losing market share. We’re not growing. Just looked at the first quarter results. Another loss. That’s four quarterly losses in a row. Our offerings are usually a half step behind the competition.”

Max listened intently as Leo explained his concerns. Leo’s voice became more animated as he talked about Jungle Tech’s executive team. “When I ask Tag and his crew questions, I get a lot of fancy pics, pretty multi media shows and oodles of spread sheets. These leaders have sales projections coming out of the ying-yang. But it’s all fluff. Something’s missing. They lack a real dream or vision for the company. Some of them lack a dream for themselves. So Dream Guru, go do your thing.”

“Leo, give me some time to get a feel for the situation. Then let’s talk some more. Before I go, tell me, how do you and your president get along?”

Leo groaned and muttered, “Tag the tiger and his wife, Tanya, moved from Asia. Tag’s one of the best leaders on paper. But he needs help. We get along great, outside of business. Tag plays a good game of golf. Use to have a good sense of humor. He and his team sling a lot of techno speak. I get tired of asking questions and getting Business 501 answers, when I want Business 101 answers.”

“So, you exchange information. But aren’t hearing each other.”

“You got that Dream Guru! Need you to take him through that DREAM model you took me through way back. Changed my life!”

Max built a dream coaching methodology he has used for years. It has five enlightening phases he guides the animals and birds through. The five phases are:

D - Designing Your Dream
R - Reality Scan
E - Energizing Goals
A - Action Stepping Stones
M - Motivation Beyond Achievement

"Okay Leo, let me meet Tag. I'll get to know him and then we'll talk some more. Till then, take care. And say hi to that charming lioness that puts up with you, and who's way too good for you."

Leo laughed as he helped Max find the door. "She sure is too good for a rough old lion like me. She's also very special wife to forgive me for that dumb mistake I made a number of years ago."

After Max departed, Leo called up Tag the tiger. He indicated that he'd wanted to have a Dream Coach named, Max the monkey, spend time with the Jungle Tech leadership team. Tag scoffed at the term, Dream Coach. Leo didn't care. Whatever the term, Max was coming in. Leo assured Tag that Max would work closely with the President. Max would touch base with Leo on an infrequent basis. Max was to be Tag's monkey. Tag fired pointed questions at Leo about Max's purpose and objectives.

"Tag, you work that out with the Dream Guru. But I want a report back to me. And there better be some kind of quick action. Not just talk about strategies way, way down the road. I wanna real dream for Jungle Tech that sparks action, action, action!"

Tag the tiger didn't see that he or his team had a need for any kind of coach. He laughed and told Leo it'd be a waste of his valuable time.

"Come on Tag. Let's talk Jungle Tech performance."

Tag swallowed hard. “Well, But what about that extensive strategic plan we built and presented?”

Leo tugged on his long black mane. For these conversations with Tag were driving the lion crazy. Leo wondered if something was jammed in Tag’s ears, effecting the tiger’s ability to listen? “Your exec team haven’t implemented one meaningful goal from that plan. I assure you. This is for your benefit and Jungle Tech.”

Tag wanted more details, throwing out additional road blocks. Except, Leo insisted, leaving a resigned Tag reluctantly agreeing to give it a chance.

“Oh one more thing Tag. Max is blind, but don't worry, he’ll do fine. That monkey’s helped many executives reach their dream and their company’s dream. The monkey’s seen, or should I say heard, it all. He's quiet, but don't go thinking he's milquetoast. He just knows when and how to fight.”

Tag flashed his sharp fangs and thought, this will be a cake walk. No blind monkey will last with me around. I’ll eat him for dinner!

At exactly the same time, Leo smiled and said to himself, “Tag, my boy, you don’t know what’s going to hit you. It’ll be the best thing that ever happened to you.”

Now that Max was coming in, Leo relaxed somewhat. Although, he still couldn’t get rid of the other knot in his stomach. Garth the gorilla and his 22% ownership of Jungle Tech. Garth sat on the board of directors and was always a pain in Leo’s neck. There was some bad jungle wind blowing. Leo knew Garth was behind it. Relax, Leo, he said to himself, “Between your 48%, and Tag and Tanya’s 3%, we’re just fine. We still control this ship.”

The truth was Leo didn’t trust Garth the gorilla. Not only was he too loud, he was a terrible golfer, and lied about his golf score. Leo chuckled as he realized that even Max rated as a better golfer than Garth. But in Leo’s mind, no animal in the jungle could rate as high on sleazy then that knuckle dragging Garth the gorilla.

Chapter 3 - The Tiger's Lair

After slamming down his cellphone, Tag the tiger yelled, "Sophia, get in here!"

Sophia the snake slithered in and in her smoothest of voices asked, "Yes Tag, what can I do for you?"

Sophia was Tag's executive assistant. She rated as a top notch office predator. She knew how to play the game and put up with Tag, while he stood as the animal in charge. But she could switch her fake loyalties on a dime. Sophia ensured she knew which way the jungle wind was blowing. She believed that Tag wasn't doing the bang-up job he thought he was, and the heat would be turned up one of these days.

Tag snarled, "Sophia, get that bunch we call an executive team to meet me in the board room at the end of the day. No excuses. I want them all there, or conferencing in."

"Yes, Boss, right away Boss." Sophia slipped out, thinking that someone lit a match under the grumpy tiger.

Sophia sent out a meeting notice. But she decided to contact them directly as well. For Tag wanted as many there as possible. Sophia couldn't locate Leanne the leopard, VP Growth Marketing. Leanne hated being in the office when Tag was there.

Also missing in action, was Hal the hyena, VP Sales, Jungle Tech's sleazy sales leader. He'd claim he was out with a customer. Except, he was usually in the bar or chasing some fun on the side. Oh, Sophia knew the dirt. This snake could wiggle into corners only reptiles like her knew existed.

Sophia fired off a message to Hal the hyena. "Tag having meeting, come back"

Hal fired a message back with an emoji of a whiskey bottle. “On way to tennis club — drink ordered.”

Sophia pushed to get Edward the elephant, VP Technology, to attend. Edward thought the technical design he was working on was much more important than Tag’s emergency meeting. But he agreed to attend in the end.

Sophia experienced no difficulty rounding up Paula the parrot, VP Animal Resources, who was such a chirpy cheerleader type. Then there was Rock the rhino, VP Finance, who was real eye candy. Wow, thought Sophia, he can check my figures any time.

There was the exceptional Zelda the zebra, VP Customer Success. She’d dug the company out of many a trouble created by one of the executive clowns. One of those clowns was Archie the ape, VP Operations. Such an idiot, Sophia mused.

Finally there was Camilla the cougar, VP Legal. She rated as such a stuffy professional. Camilla emigrated to the jungle from Britain. Camilla thought she was better than everyone at Jungle Tech. She did, however, seem to be infatuated with Rock, who seemed to be in love with his numbers, and paid no attention to her. Although this amused Sophia, it infuriated Camilla.

What a team! They loved their titles and fancy offices Sophia thought. Plenty of talent hidden in Tag and his band of eight merry followers. Plenty of baggage hidden in there, plenty of toxic waste, plenty of secrets, plenty of skeletons, and plenty of skill gaps. As a group Sophia saw them spin their wheels, stuck in their own mud. She checked her list, realizing she’d attempted to contact all of Tag’s executive team.

- Archie the ape, VP Operations
- Camilla the cougar, VP Legal
- Edward the elephant, VP Technology
- Hal the hyena, VP Sales
- Leanne the leopard, VP Growth Marketing

- Paula the parrot, VP Animal Resources
- Rock the rhino, VP Finance
- Zelda the zebra, VP Customer Success

Later that day Tag the tiger pranced into the board room, planting himself at the head of the large mahogany table. “Thanks for coming. I’ll make this brief. I’ve decided to have a coach come into Jungle Tech to work with each of you. Max the monkey will be showing up tomorrow morning and be spending some time with us.”

Snorts go up from Archie the Ape and Edward the elephant. “A monkey,” said Archie. “What’s a dumb monkey gonna do? Swing from the trees. Oh, I mean chandeliers.”

Edward held his aristocratic trunk in the air, smugly chuckling. “Monkeys are only good for organ playing.”

Zelda the zebra suggested in her soothing voice, “I think we should give him a chance. We all could use a little coaching.”

“Not a damn chance,” Archie the ape grunted out. Grunting out gruff words was the usual manner in which Archie communicated, along with beating his chest.

“Nor I,” Edward the elephant pronounced in his permanent haughty tone.

“Everyone works with him,” declared Tag. “Paula you’re the point on this.”

“Tag, how does he work with me?” Paula the parrot asked. She ran Animal Resources for the past three years. Paula worked her way up from a clerical job. She worked hard, continually chirped pleasant and worshiped those in power.

“Simply lead the monkey around,” replied Tag. “Each of us let him solve a minor issue you’re having. Our focus is on the business. This is really cosmetic. Maybe this blind monkey can give us a few brownie points with our Chair of the Board.”

“Blind monkey,” snipped Edward. “What goof put you on to this menace?”

Archie the ape pounded his fist on the table in a fit of laughter. “Has the circus come to town? What a joke. Who’s gonna cut up the blind monkey’s bananas and feed the little freak?” Archie sent a message with an emoji of a monkey off to Hal the hyena. “Tag’s a fool! Order me drink”

Rock the rhino touched his wire-rim glasses and said in his quiet voice, “Hey, I don’t see so well. I still do a good job. Give this monkey a chance. Never hurts to get an outside perspective on how we can improve as executives.”

Camilla the cougar’s first instinct was to support Rock. She cleared her voice and stumbled over her first words. “I, ah, well, I agree with Rock. Give this monkey a chance. Tag, you said something about keeping our chair happy. Does Leo the lion know about this monkey coming in?”

“Yah, yah Camilla, Told Leo what I was doing. Leo kind of knows this Max the monkey. Calls him the Dream Guru. But remember, Max reports directly to me and only me. Don’t be airing any dirty laundry around this monkey. I want him in and out. End of meeting. Back to work.”

Paula fluttered off to clean up her office and prepare for Max’s arrival. She sent a message to the receptionist that a blind monkey named Max would be showing up in the morning, and to send him right up to her office. Paula contacted Sophia the snake, to get Max a few minutes with Tag. Tag oozed strength as a leader thought Paula. She felt good when he’s in control, and she could simply follow orders. That made things happy and nice.

Sophia received a call shortly after the meeting wrapped up from Leanne the Leopard. Leanne issued a mock apology for not being able to attend the meeting. Both snickered and got down to business.

“What was the meeting all about?” Leanne asked.

“Looks like Tag’s having some blind monkey come in and work with each executive as a coach. Don’t see what the fuss is about.”

“Certainly, I do not require any coaching,” Leanne said in her arrogant tone. “Glad I didn’t cancel my massage to attend. Tag doesn’t know what he’s doing. If I was running the company, things would look different.”

“Oh, you never know what’s ahead of us Leanne. There seems to be something more to this monkey. Our Chair, Leo, is more involved then we think. I’ll keep my ears low to the ground. Tag talks way too loud for his own good.”

“That Tag’s simply an overgrown kitty. But if Leo’s involved I must be a little more careful about laughing in this monkey’s face. I do recall hearing of a blind monkey that Leo brought into a former employer of mine. But it was after I'd left.” Leanne sighed and continued on with her arrogant tone, “I’ll merely tell that monkey what to do. Failing that, I’ll use my charm. Have him wrapped around my little claw in no time.”

Sophia smiled to herself. She knew Leanne was lacking in the charm department. “I’ll ensure the monkey knows his place.”

“With the two of us working the monkey, he might even recommend that I, Leanne the leopard, be the new Jungle Tech President.”

“And I’ll be right there backing you up,” promised Sophia.

Leanne replied with fake sincerity, “Sophia, you are the best. Keep me posted on what you see. Meanwhile, I’ll start manipulating a half-wit monkey. What a breeze!”

Leanne sent a message and an emoji of a clown off to Hal the hyena, “Meeting a joke. So is Tag!!!”

Chapter 4 – The Dark Jungle

The next morning Max the monkey arrived at Jungle Tech's lavish headquarters. He'd a frightful time finding the place as the taxi driver dropped him off at the wrong building. The taxi driver insisted they were at Jungle Tech headquarters. After rushing Max out, he'd sped off.

When Max arrived at the wrong building, he asked for directions. The security guard, who was a baboon, pointed repeatedly at the Jungle Tech building. Finally, Max got through to the blubbering baboon that he was blind and received some incoherent verbal directions. Oh, the mobility challenges of the blind. It wasn't like it'd been when he was able to see and enjoy the visual world. Although, he sure enjoyed discovering the wonderful gifts the other senses presented him.

The first voice Max heard as he walked into the reception room of Jungle Tech was the confident sound of the receptionist, Gracie the giraffe. "Welcome, Max, we've been expecting you. My name's Gracie. If there's anything you need, please ask. Let me guide you to Paula the parrot's office. She's the first one you'll be meeting with today. Later, you'll meet with the big cat himself, Tag the tiger. I took the liberty of finding you a spot to sit. It's close to the washroom, lunchroom and the elevator. If you need any reading done for you or any other help, just call. Shall we go? Do you like to be guided by the elbow or shoulder?"

Max flashed her a warm smile. "Gracie, you're a gem! You should be Vice President of First Impressions, cause you make great ones. Thank you, please give me your elbow and show me the way."

Gracie and Max motored off, chattering all the way to Paula's office. Max could tell that Gracie was tall and athletic. He was sure she played a serious game of basketball. He was every bit as sure

that she was just as good on the court as she was in the office. Some giraffes naturally had talent.

On their trip they walked past Zelda the zebra. Introductions were made. They'd a brief chat. Max's first impression was favorable. Although, a tired tone came from the zebra's voice.

Paula the parrot waited for Max with nervous anticipation. When they arrived at Paula's office, Gracie ushered in Max. Introductions were made. Gracie found Max a chair, insisting Max call her when he was done with Paula and Tag.

When Max was settled in his chair, Paula started chirping and couldn't quit. Paula fluttered about and rambled on, non-stop, without Max getting a word in edgewise. Finally, Paula came out with it. "I'm so nervous. Never spent any time with a blind monkey before. What do I do?"

"Thank you for sharing that. First thing's to relax. If I need any assistance, I'll ask. Also, if you have any questions about blindness, please feel free to ask."

"It must be awful Max! How do you survive?"

Max sighed. "I still live a full life. Sure, there are many things this monkey can't do. But I've learned to enjoy other exciting things."

"Wow! I'm so scared in the dark."

"You get used to it Paula."

She shut her eyes. "Oh, I couldn't." She opened her eyes. "Now Tag told me to be the point person with you."

"It'll be enjoyable working together."

"I-I want to work with you as a coach, and learn. But, well, ah, you're not after my job or anything like that?"

Reassuringly, Max leaned forward. "Paula, I can guarantee you that I am not after yours or anyone else's job here. This monkey's no longer a part of the jungle and loves it. Doing a special favor for a special friend. That's the only reason I'm here. I want to assist each

of the Jungle Tech executive team to be a better leader, and a better animal or bird."

"You bet!" Paula fluttered excitedly in her chair. "Let's get started. What do we do?"

"That's the spirit. Let me get settled. I'll meet with Tag. If I could please have some assistance to find Tag's office, it'd be greatly appreciated."

"All right, how do I guide you?"

Max instructed Paula on how to guide him and away they went. Paula continued to chat up a storm. Purposefully, she wanted Max to be aware of how great a president her boss, Tag the tiger was. As Max was being guided by Paula's elbow, he gained a better sense of her being.

She seemed to be a little unsure of her place in the jungle boardroom. She stood as the only bird with all those mammals. Sometimes she felt like she was being left out. He could tell by her elbow that she was a little plump and wore discount department store clothes. He figured her natural beautiful feather coat was much more beautiful than any clothing, no matter how expensive.

Paula chattered and chattered. She said she hated wearing clothes to work. But did it to fit in. She didn't care what the clothes looked like. She knew she was beautiful naked, so to speak. Max smiled, he knew what she meant. But it was her delivery and eagerness to please that amused him.

Paula continued to chatter. She revealed she hated exercising, especially running. After all, she could simply fly to places in less than half the time it took to run. Besides, she was certain that she didn't look plump under her beautiful coat of many colors. Max reassured her that she looked fine, the irony of which she missed. She was a pleasant, eager and happy parrot, even if she was starting to repeat herself.

Chapter 5 - The Eye of the Tiger

Max was introduced to Sophia outside of Tag's office. The first thing Max noticed was how hypnotizing her opium perfume smelt. Wow, this rated as one exotic snake. He determined by the sound of her movements, that her skintight satin dress covered a curvaceous figure. Max speculated her dress was red, and she'd her dark hair pulled back severely at the temples.

Max felt her dark eyes drilling into him. Sophia insisted Max must come by and see her from time to time. Alarm bells rang in Max's head. He knew snakes tracked their prey by scent. He wondered what she was trying to hide underneath her perfume? He knew this slippery one would have to be handled carefully. He was certain she had more than one of the executives eating right out of her forked tongue.

After the usual introductory pleasantries were completed, Max was led into Tag's spacious office. He was seated in a most uncomfortable chair. Max wondered if they put the good furniture away, so the monkey wouldn't ruin it? Obviously, he was being made to feel uncomfortable. Max heard the door slam shut. Dead silence filled the room. Max could have cut the tension with a machete.

Max broke the silence. "Tag, it's a pleasure to meet you. I'm looking forward to working with you." Max rose, extending his hand for Tag to shake. There was no paw offered back. Max guessed Tag wasn't refusing his hand shake offer because of germ worries. He thought here we go, let the jungle games begin.

Tag started pacing, heavy purring filling the room. The tiger halted. "Let's get one thing straight. You work for me. You dance to my tune. I say jump. You say how high? That's the way this thing

will work. I'll say when you're done. Maybe you'll get out of here alive."

Max dragged out the moment. In his early days in the jungle, he'd let this sort of aggressive animal run rough shod over him, but not now. Max figured that Tag had one or two more snarls in him, and then they would really talk. Max thought they might be able to work together. Except, it first might take a show down.

"Tag, I recognize you are the president and I respect that fact. I'll certainly take direction from you. But."

Tag interrupted, "No buts. You'll take all direction from me, little monkey. You're in my jungle and I am the king. Got it?"

Max waited a second, letting his racing heart slow down. "As I was saying. But I'm a professional and conduct myself accordingly. If my working arrangement with Jungle Tech isn't amenable to delivering an effective Dream Coaching service, then I'll move on."

"Professional my ass! If I want you to do something, you'll do it. You're going to make me look good in front of Leo. I know how to run things. You don't want the eye of this tiger focused on you, got it. How can a blind monkey help a bunch of talented executives? You'll be told what tiny issues to fix with my executives. Then we'll put some fluffy cosmetic plan together to fix the stupid made up issues. You tell Leo that I and Jungle Tech are great. Show you the door. Do you see things clearly now?"

Max gambled that Tag had shot his last bullet. He rose to leave. It was now or never. "Tag, I can help your executives with their personal and professional lives. Make you, them and Jungle Tech more effective. But not under these conditions. I'm a pretty accommodating monkey. You'll maintain control and will receive the accolades you desire. But this monkey can't help you unless you want to be helped. Maybe with your super eyesight, you're missing the obvious."

"I miss nothing."

“One more thing, do you know what Leo’s next step is, if I fail?”

This was only a last resort for Max. He seldom went here, but he knew Tag was a jungle fighter. This was the only way. Make it or break it, right now. Max swished his white cane, fumbling about, heading for the door.

Tag laugh loudly, taking Max by the shoulder. Tag shook Max’s hand. “Leo spoke highly of you. I see why. You have guts, tough monkey. Wish some of my team had your brass.”

The next hour flew by as the two animals talked about the Jungle Tech business, market, financials, animal resources and organizational issues. They started covering Tag’s vision for the future. The President presented his 130-slide deck to Max with numerous charts, reams of numbers and seamless transitions. Tag glowed proud with his multimedia show, colored pretty diagrams, growing charts, video clips and endless details depicted by colorful glitz.

Tag slipped into the visual details much too quickly, falling into a visual trap. Max thought Tag was being led by his visual presentation, rather than being supported by those visual images. Tag was more in love with his show, then the actual strategic plan.

Max asked Tag numerous questions. Tag became flustered. Max talked Tag into taking a walk. Time to pull Tag away from his presentation. Time to gain a fresh perspective.

Tag chatted up a storm as they cruised along, enjoying the sunshine. Max asked the question, “Tag, you currently are in the middle of the pack as far as market share. Your financial performance is questionable. Do you really want to move up and be a big player? Or stay where you are?”

Tag stopped. “Of course, I want to grow.”

“What’s your true dream for Jungle Tech?”

“Isn’t it clear from my slide deck?”

Max shook his head. “Nothing is clear from your presentation. Now, what is your true dream? What brings a fire to your belly when you think about it?”

Tag scratched his head, turned and looked hard and long at Max, purring softly, “My true dream is to make Jungle Tech number one in our industry.”

“Now you’re talking!”

Tag sputtered, “But, ah. I guess we have all it takes to achieve that dream. But I get so angry. We’ll never get there with this bunch.”

“We can be there. But it takes a lot of strength and guts to change. It takes guts to pursue that dream of number one.”

“I’ve got the guts. I guess some of my executive team do as well. Can we really do it?”

“Yes,” replied Max. “But for this to be successful, it’ll require some major changes in direction.”

“But-but we built a strategic plan!”

“That you, nor your team, really buy in to. Is that right Tag?”

The President kicked the ground with his front paw. “Yeah!”

“Nor will that old strategic plan take you to number one.”

“Yeah Max!”

“So, let’s make the major transformation that gets you to number one.”

“But Max, that type of massive change will be hard. Real hard.”

“That dream will be hard on the executives and staff. Some will make it. A few might not.”

Tag wiped his forehead. “Wow! It really is the only way Jungle Tech will survive in this competitive jungle. We go big. Or we go home.”

“In this case, absolutely! Now Tag, who is your confidante? The one you share issues or use as a sounding board?”

“No one really. I used to bounce things off my wife, Tanya the tigress. But that hasn’t happened for quite some time.”

Max heard the disappointment in Tag’s voice. He felt Tag’s powerful shoulders slump. “You need someone like that. All leaders do.”

“Heck, I’ve shared more with you in our first meeting than I've shared with anyone for ages.”

“Tag, let’s keep talking. You and Jungle Tech have an exciting future. I want to help you go to the next level.”

“You bet. What do we need to do?”

“Continue to walk.”

Over the next half an hour, Max took Tag through a walk and talk creative exercise. Max used this as one of his tools under the Designing Your Dream phase of his DREAM model. It assisted Tag to clarify what he meant by being number one. Also, it became the first step in Tag bringing out some other personal dreams he’d hidden.

Tag’s energy level rose. “Max, I see you as the one to drive this transformation of Jungle Tech. Whatever you require.”

“That’s the spirit. But it won’t be me leading it. We need to engage your executive team first. This is a big undertaking. We’re not talking surface change here. Who would be the one person that would be best suited to drive this massive transformation?”

“Zelda the zebra, our VP Customer Success, without a doubt. Rock the rhino, our VP Finance would be a great right hand.”

“We’ll need strong leaders with a lot of credibility. They’ll have to dedicate a tremendous amount of time to this transformation.”

Tag thought as he swished his tail. “You know we’ve tried these types of things before. But they don’t do near what I think they

will. Had some smart consultants in with great ideas. We never do much."

"Could be a lot of things Tag. Lack of creativity, not thinking outside the box. Not having the discipline to follow through on the plan. Sometimes it is the lack of decision-making, the ability to make those tough decisions. Often there is a lot of saluting the flag during meetings. But when the leadership teams go back to their fancy offices they continue walking the same old trail."

"We've walked many wrong trails over the past two years at Jungle Tech," stated Tag.

"The true transformation trail is hard! Most give up."

"Not going to happen to us. We'll meet with the executive team tomorrow. But Max, what are you up to tonight? Let's get Zelda. Let's get focused on the target."

"Great idea. Then we need to take it to the executive team. Get them engaged. We need their brains and energy. You also want to see and hear who is on side and who is off side. The vocal opposition is great. The passive resistance can be poison."

On the walk back Max took Tag through a Wheel of Life exercise which initiated Tag's thoughts and feelings around his life as a whole. It became clear this tiger's life was way out of balance. Tag agreed they'd dive into more on his personal Design Your Dream phase. Jungle Tech being number one was his primary dream. But what was Tag willing to give up to get it?

For the last minutes of the walk, Max and Tag shared a laugh or two. Tag enjoyed learning how to guide Max and to describe the visual surroundings. Tag almost delivered Max into a signpost. Both enjoyed a good laugh and after Tag apologized, they carried on more carefully. Tag carried a prance in his step and a glowing smile on his face when he walked in the building.

Gracie the giraffe leaned down and whispered to Max in the reception area, "I haven't seen the big cat smile like that in two years. You're a magician."

Certainly, it ended on a more cordial basis than the confrontational opening of the meeting. Max felt they'd built a little trust. It was a start. Tag, Max and Zelda were going for dinner tonight. Tag sent Sophia a message to schedule an executive meeting for tomorrow to cover the topic. Max had work to do. He was off and running. Time to dig in. He pondered which jungle character would put up the biggest fight on this project?

Over at the tennis club Garth the gorilla planned his fighting strategy. He thought he knew how to fight in many different ways. "I've a proposition for you," said the rich gorilla into his new gold jPhone. Garth had to be the first in the jungle to get any new toy. "It involves a certain President's wife. I'll see you tomorrow at 2:00 at center court."

Chapter 6 – Method Behind The Monkey

For the rest of the morning Gracie assisted Max in making his office functional. Also, Max spent quality time with Paula the parrot, working on her Designing Your Dream phase. He used the Rocking chair exercise with Paula. Her discovery was that in her vision of her life, she hoped to be more assertive, acquire more education and learn to relax.

Max's talking cellphone with the friendliest of automated voices informed him it was time for lunch and a quick walk outside to digest the morning's information. Max loved to walk and wear off those extra pounds arising from his consuming excess bananas and peanuts. For today's lunch he had those delicious peanut butter and banana sandwiches, his favorite. As always, he inhaled one or two

more then he should. But if he walked and exercised, he could keep his weight in check.

Max finished that walk and had a clear head. It was time to locate the washroom. He knew it was close to his workstation, he'd gotten slightly turned around when Gracie was guiding him earlier in the day. It was either a left then a right, or two lefts. He'd figure it out, and if not ask.

Max laughed as he thought of the time he dropped his cell phone on the washroom floor. He was in there all by himself. Max heard it slide away from him, but didn't know how far it'd gone. There he was down on his hands and knees, sliding his white cane back and forth, attempting to locate the cell. It was his good fortune that his wife Mindy called. The sound of her unique ringtone got him pointed in the right direction. Finally, he felt his cell. He answered with an exuberant "Hello dear! And I thank you."

Max had been married to Mindy for many wonderful years. They raised a great family and had been there for each other through it all. Max felt he was one extremely fortunate monkey to have a partner like Mindy and such wonderful children. He remembered the sadness resulting from his vision loss. He remembered the day he couldn't see his beautiful wife's face, or the smiling faces of his kids. It hit him hard. It took a while to truly accept the darkness.

Rock the rhino spotted Max heading back to his workspace. Quietly, he came over to introduce himself. "Hi Max, my name's Rock the rhino. Welcome to Jungle Tech. Great to have you working with us."

"Thank you Rock, my pleasure to be here. I look forward to working with you."

"My sight isn't so good," Rock whispered. "So I somewhat understand your situation. Therefore if you need any help, please feel free to call."

Max thanked Rock and the two spent a few minutes getting to know each other.

"Could I start my Dream Coaching session soon?" Rock scratched the hallway wall with his horn nervously. "I need help. And I need it quick."

Max thought how fortunate he was to have his DREAM model. He'd attempt to take each executive through that methodology. Whose dreams would be different then Tag's dream? Whose dreams would be in direct opposition of that number one dream? But that DREAM model would bring all that out.

Max's DREAM Model was based on the socratic method. Socrates used a process for all to find themselves which involved asking questions

That was the cornerstone of the DREAM model, asking thought provoking questions versus giving advice. For everyone knows the most about their situation. They've thought the most about their situation. And they've the most to gain or lose. Also, Within the DREAM model, there resided stimulating exercises and tools, some of which, remove the visual, to enhance the use of the other senses.

But as Leo the lion always said to Max, "Those exercises and tools you use are fantastic! But those questions you ask, get right to the heart of the issue and the true dream."

After his chat with Rock, Max continued to make his way to his workspace. Sophia called on his cell, "Come and see me right now. I need an update."

"I'll be coming to ask you some questions very soon Sophia. Working through the process."

"Process," Sophia exclaimed. "You'll never get us following any process."

“Don’t be scared of process,” said Max. “You’ll be key to any new executive processes.”

Sophia froze. She backed off. She thought, he might be on to the fact I keep my power by ignoring process and creating chaos, lots of chaos.

When Max arrived at his workspace, Edward the elephant called him. “You’ve requested network access to Jungle Tech’s highly secure system. I must think about this. Are you trustworthy?”

Max attempted to talk Edward into moving the request along. But Edward had a host of concerns. Edward promised to get to it as soon as possible. But claimed he was a busy elephant. Max made one call to that sharp receptionist Gracie the giraffe. He explained the situation. Ten minutes went by and Max received a call.

“It’s done,” said Gracie, laughing. “You’ve learned who to call if you need results.”

Five minutes later Paula the parrot and Archie the ape walked by Max’s workspace. Max was cordially introduced to Archie. The first words out of Archie were, “I don’t think much of monkeys. Especially ones who try to change me. Don’t see anything that needs changing.”Archie raised his fist. “So don’t be coming around my branch.”

Early in any engagement was ‘the big ego time' as Max called it. Some executive team members attempted to figure out which way the wind was blowing. They were status, power and control conscious, and tried to maintain the status quo. They played a cautious game, if they were worried about losing power or face. Max hoped that garbage would break down quickly this time. Regardless, Max would start moving the executives forward. Even though, some executives harbored other ideas.

For example, Max received a message from Leanne the leopard, issuing a direct command. “Stop whatever you are doing! Don’t go forward till I tell you.”

For this project, Max anticipated it’d take approximately one month before the foundation work could be completed, and the Jungle Tech executives would be ready for some serious strategic planning. There were a ton of mind shifts that needed to take place. Otherwise the dream, goals and action plans developed would be lacking, and implementation would fail.

This first month was what Max referred to as the initial unfreezing of the current state. In order to have the right mind sets to develop an effective future state. Max smiled to himself. He liked the word 'unfreeze'. He knew it wasn’t a word. But it described what really happened with executive teams.

Max received a second message from Leanne. “As with all my direct reports, I’ll expect regular updates from you.”

Chapter 7 - Degree Of Change

Tag the tiger strutted around with a newfound confidence, ever since he’d returned from his walk with Max. He supported a huge smile on his face. Sophia the snake wore shock. She’d never witnessed that side of Tag. She slipped into Tag’s office. “How’s it going boss? Is this monkey any good?”

Tag stretched and purred, “He’s exactly what Jungle Tech needs. We’re going to be number one. This time we’re going to transform this place to what it can be. No excuses!”

“That’s great Tag.”

Sophia figured there was no way that this executive team could do it. It was time to make sure that Garth the gorilla knew she was

on his side. Well, as long as Garth held a solid chance of winning. He hadn't won yet. So, she'd play both sides. Also, Garth had been making her nervous and uncomfortable with his recent comments about where her loyalty stood.

Sophia found a corner and called him up, leaving a voice message. "Hi Garth. Sophia checking in with you. Leo and Tag have some blind monkey in here to help the executive team. Looks like another lame plan. But thought you'd want to know. Tag has a new strut in his walk. They're having a dinner meeting tonight. I'll let you know what happens. This monkey appears to have some sort of link to Leo. But I know you can handle them all."

Dinner with Tag the tiger and Zelda the zebra was just what the vet ordered. The great food, sweet aromas and excellent conversation lifted all three to a new level of thought with their creativity at an all time high. Max enjoyed his usual banana martini. Tag and Zelda tried one but Zelda claimed they were too strong for her. Tag said bananas were not for him. Zelda stuck to her merlot and Tag went back to his Jack Daniels.

Zelda commented, "Tag, I haven't seen you this relaxed in a while."

"Something happened this morning," remarked Tag. "Can't put my claw on it. Ever since Max and I chatted about my dream, debating the future of this company, I feel energized. I believe there's a way forward. Going to transform Jungle Tech into number one."

Zelda swallowed hard. Her left ear began to twitch. "Number one."

Tag slapped the table. "You bet!"

Max held up his hands. "Hang on Tag. That's your dream. Not Zelda or anyone else on your team."

Tag eased back in his chair, stroking his whiskers. "Good point."

“Zelda, what do you think of that Jungle Tech dream?” Max asked.

She let out an exhausted breath. “It won’t be easy! The challenges are huge.” She snickered. “But you know. I love that dream!”

Tag pumped his paw. “And Zelda, we need you to drive the project to transform us. Don’t take your eye off the ball. Our number one priority. Anything you want.”

Zelda’s left ear began to twitch at double time. “Wow!”

Tag held up his paw. “But first, work with Max on your dream. And if this fits? We’d also like to select a couple of other executives for the team. I want our strongest resources leading this project. Who else would you like on your transformation team? That is, if you agree.”

Zelda smiled and thought for a moment. “First off, I want to work with Max on my own dreams. But I’m ready to lead this transformation.”

“Yes!” Tag whacked that table hard.

Zelda spoke in a confident manner, “Rock would be a real asset.”

“Of course, Paula, from the animal resources perspective. Archie should be involved. As he’s the most animals and birds working for him. Even though, he’ll fight us every step of the way. Possibly, Leanne could be a good contributor, but.”

Tag snarled, “She’s got her own agenda. Great to get her involved. But we’ve tried before. She loves to sabotage.”

“Let’s have Leanne on a special project,” Max said. “I want to get to know her and get the real goods.”

“Perfect!” Tag struck the table one more time. “Brief me later.”

Zelda rubbed her hoofs together. “Now what’s the real goal? Will you settle for something less then number one?”

Tag struck his paw down even harder. “It’s to be number one! And only number one!”

“Exactly what I want to hear,” Zelda said. “That’ll involve transforming every area of our company. Is Jungle Tech ready for that? There’ll be tough calls. Especially in the Sales and Growth Marketing areas. They’ll try to hide behind their relationship with you know who.”

“I assure you Zelda. We’ll look at it all. No one gets to hide. Not even me.” Tag pounded his paw repeatedly, making the table cry out in pain.

“Some execs will be defensive,” predicted Zelda. “You know they’ll want to only do incremental improvements. Every time we get close to making a fundamental change, they back off. They’re afraid of massive change!”

Max interrupted the two, “Let me address it in tomorrow's meeting. We’ll try to find out who can handle a quantum leap, and who is uncomfortable with that. Let’s have a good old fashioned jungle fight to get to the bottom of their concerns. But we need to come out with a team decision and one dream.”

Tag ended the discussion, “Let’s hash it out and come out as one. I know which way I want to go.”

Max tapped his finger on the table. “Tag, for the first while after you kick it off, simply listen to the others. Don’t lay it out there. It is important to get out the concerns and roadblocks first. That way, we can gain greater consensus and address the issues.”

“Okay, I understand,” Tag agreed.

Zelda nodded her head. “Good point, I know I want to transform. But I want to hear the others. They may have points of view I haven’t thought of. I want to understand them. Not simply defending what I think.”

“Excellent!” Max rubbed his hands together, feeling the positive energy flowing from the two animals.

The dinner wrapped up. Max took care of the bill. Tag and Zelda rose to leave. Soon they were absorbed in an invigorating conversation surrounding the transformation. By the time Max

settled up with the waitress, they'd left out the front door without him.

The sharp waitress caught on and said, "Hold on, we can still catch them."

"Thank you, your quick. They think I have a homing device."

The waitress guided Max through the maze of tables in the restaurant. As they came out the front door, the waitress called out across the street to Zelda and Tag, "I think you forgot somebody." She guided Max to where the two stared in shock.

Tag shuffled his paws in embarrassment. "I'm sorry, Max. We forgot all about you. We were so wrapped up in our topic. Got to get used to having a blind monkey around."

Zelda hugged Max. "I'm so sorry."

The monkey flashed his big smile. "No problem. I've been left in worse places. Usually someone comes to my rescue. Our wonderful waitress helped me out. Or I'd have probably ended up back in the kitchen, ladies washroom, or maybe the coat room, talking to the coats."

They wrapped up the evening with Max, Tag, and Zelda thanking the waitress profusely, and Tag adding to her already sizable tip. The three jumped in a taxi, sped off laughing and knowing the meeting in the morning wouldn't be as cordial as this evening.

Chapter 8 - All Aboard

The following morning Max sent messages to each of the execs, attempting to schedule a coaching sessions. Within two hours, Zelda, Rock, Paula, Camilla and Tag responded with an affirmative. Archie the ape did respond, but indicating no way.

Leanne responded immediately, indicating she didn't need any type of coaching. From the others, there'd be no response he suspected until things heated up, until they were forced, or until the transformation project directly impacted their world.

Max wandered into the executive boardroom a half hour before the meeting to gain a feel for the room. He'd settled in with his Braille notes, focusing on the preparatory information. Soon Max heard whispering coming from down the hall. Max picked up two sets of steps. He knew one was a female and the other a male. He smelt Par Amour perfume and Captain Morgan rum. He'd never understand why an animal wanted to smell like flowers. But at least it was better than smelling like Captain Morgan.

Leanne the Leopard and Hal the Hyena arrived. Both were shocked as they turned on the lights and went to shut the door. Leanne blurted out, "Who are you? What are you doing here?"

Max heard a lot about Leanne from her time in another company he'd worked with in the past. She'd left a controversial trail behind her. Finally, Max got to meet the much talked about leopard.

"I'm Max the monkey, working on a project with Jungle Tech. Pleased to meet you. Your names are?" he asked as he held out his hand. All shook with insincere introductions from Leanne and Hal.

The hyena let fly with his high pitched laugh. "You're that monkey that everyone's talking about. What are you doing in here without the lights turned on?"

"How can you sit here in the dark?" Leanne asked with an incredulous tone. "We leopards have excellent night vision. But you inferior monkeys are much less capable."

Max held up a sheet of thick paper. "I'm reading some Braille notes. Therefore, lights don't matter to me. Did you need the room before the meeting? I can go somewhere else."

Leanne popped a pill and stumbled with her words seemingly thrown by the situation. “Ah, well, ah, Hal, and I were going to simply have a quick chat in private. Best you leave.”

Hal sneered, showing off his sharp white teeth. “You see this is a board room for executives. Not monkeys.”

Graciously, Max rose. “No problem, I’ll go back to my workspace. Oh Leanne, about your messages yesterday, let’s talk in more detail later. Unless we cover your points in the executive meeting.”

Leanne blushed as she got his point. “I suppose so.”

Hal made a mocking monkey face after Max left. “I hope we weren’t rude when we kicked him out of here. Wouldn’t want the little monkey to get mad.”

Leanne scratched one of her claws on the table. “We must watch ourselves. I hear Max might be one of Leo’s pawns. May not be the push over I hoped for. Seems strange him sitting in this room alone in the dark. What did he say he was doing with that Braille thing?”

“Got no idea. Must be monkey talk. Now about that takeover.”

The executive meeting commenced with all attending. Tag kicked it off, laying out the basics of what he and Max covered the day before. There were a couple of cracks directed at Tag, about the fact that he’d previously stated that he’d have the monkey handle a couple of their minor issues, and send him away. One look from Tag, and the comments ended.

It was Max’s turn. He’d spent a few hours after the dinner meeting analyzing some basic information about Jungle Tech and their competitors in the industry. The team squirmed in shock as this monkey threw out some of their numbers in relation to the industry. The data displayed an unflattering picture. Even Tag cringed. Max summarized the information in two crisp charts. He knew if he

didn’t put the information into a visual media, the group wouldn’t believe the numbers.

Rock the rhino grinned and nodded. Previously, He’d hit this team with some of this data, and the group shrugged it off. In this meeting, Archie simply grunted in disgust. Edward the elephant, Leanne the leopard and Hal the hyena attempted to denounce it with angry outbursts. But they were convinced of its validity by Max and Rock. Clearly, Rock found a new friend in Max. Of course, if Rock liked Max, then so did Camilla the cougar.

Now that Max set some facts in place. He took them up to the strategic level with the use of his DREAM model, and never let them go down. For the DREAM model possessed tremendous power for not only individuals, but groups as well. His facilitation skills were at their best. The team was taken through a thought provoking creative session that left all exhausted, especially Max. They fought, argued, slamming their paws and tails. Hal, Leanne, Edward and Archie stood as the most defensive. They wanted the least amount of change. They even tried a couple of old deflection tricks. Max headed those off. Logic worked against them.

Edward caved first. “Certainly, There may be a logical case for what you are proposing. I must analyze this further. But I’m willing to proceed to the next step.”

Max went out on a limb when he suggested that Leanne lead a sub team that looked at transforming the Sales area and the Growth Marketing area in unison. This Sales and Growth Marketing sub project would still be under the umbrella of the overall Jungle Tech transformation project, but would be treated like a special project with its own team leader.

Also, Max told Leanne that she’d be able to present her findings to the board. When Leanne heard that she might have face time with the big shots. Leanne changed her spots immediately, going for it. But in the back of her mind, she thought there was no way she’d co-operate with the overall transformation project,

thinking she'd crush the overall leader like a bug. Unless of course, that leader was her.

Rock pointed out the future for increases in sales commissions with a transformed Jungle Tech. Clumsily, Camilla backed up Rock's points, surprising considering she rated as a highly regarded lawyer within the jungle legal community. Hal, who was in charge of sales, finally caved in. He realized that increased commissions meant bigger dollars for him, and besides Leanne had already bought in. Archie grew quieter as the session went on. Reluctantly, he agreed with a final angry grunt.

The team came to a consensus that it was time for a large-scale transformation. They all agreed, whatever their personal reasons. Also, It'd been agreed that Zelda would head up the executive committee for the transformation project with Leanne gritting her teeth at that appointment.

Rock, Paula, Leanne and a squirming Archie would join Zelda on the team. Smugly, Leanne claimed she only had a faint dotted line to this team. Most groaned at her predictable immaturity. Leanne didn't hear the groans. For her brain worked double time, calculating her next political move.

Leanne rated high on jungle politics. Max hoped she rated as high on attaining results. As well, when the issue of communications for the newly formed transformation team arose, Leanne scoffed at Zelda's ability to communicate effectively. Leanne insisted that Max sit in on one of her Growth Marketing team meetings. Leanne whispered in Max's ear while sitting next to him," Let me show you how a future president communicates."

On a cue from Max, Tag re-enforced that the Dream Guru would be working with each of the executives. He'd be coaching them through the transformation, and everyone, including himself, may require individualized development in a specific area. They were to give Max full co-operation. Tag gave them little room for argument on that point.

Max conducted a round table. Publicly, all declared they were buying in on the transformation. The team was semi committed at best in Max's mind. But it was a start. Finally, Tag closed by praising them all for their great contributions. He claimed it rated as one of the best meetings they'd ever had.

As the meeting was wrapping up, Sophia the snake ensured she moved in such a way that it'd be difficult for Rock to ignore her. Sure enough, soon Rock watched Sophia and, of course, Camilla watched Rock watching Sophia. Rock took the first step into another form of a visual trap.

Camilla fumed. She wanted to act, and act quickly. She almost volunteered to take minute's at all future meetings, so Sophia wouldn't have to attend. But decided, she didn't want to stoop that low. After all, she was chief legal counsel for the company.

"Rock, I've some documents in my office that require your immediate signature," Camila said. "And Sophia, you are aware that Jungle Tech's dress code also applies to the lowly reptiles here?"

Camilla scanned Sophia's social media last night. If Rock studied the massive amount of seductive pics Sophia displayed, he'd ruin his eyes from the heat intensity. Why did that sexy snake have to put on such a show for Rock in person, or online?

Sophia turned to Camilla and hissed, "I can change my skin at any time, and dress codes are for mammals." Then in her most sensual voice while looking directly into Rock's eyes, she said, "Besides, that code clearly does not take into account the incredible heat that's generated in the jungle."

Max overheard the exchange and thought, this jungle was definitely going to be hot, in more ways than one.

Chapter 9 – The Communication Web

Garth the gorilla inhaled another drink at his private table in the tennis club, alone but for his obsession for wealth and power. He analyzed actions, considered and rejected various ploys, and decided how best to exploit others with all the acuity and detachment of a chess master. Except, he didn't play chess, and things never worked out the way he planned.

Also, he wondered how much leverage his inherited wealth and power would win him with the females in the jungle? He knew Leanne the leopard would do anything for the presidency. And he'd do anything to corner that beautiful, slippery Sophia the snake. But for today he'd work on Leanne, sending her a message. "You'll make a very hot president."

The next step in Max's process was for him to get to know the executives through one-on-one Dream Coaching sessions. Now that Tag mandated all the team were to engage with the Dream Guru, would some of them still avoid him? Max hoped to guide each executive on both their personal and professional lives. It'd take that individual to a new level of achievement if all aspects could be covered.

Over the following two weeks, the posturing in these one-on-one sessions became apparent. But session by session, the dreams of some executives came clearer. Except, for Hal, Leanne, Edward and Archie, who all scheduled one session, sort of. For Hal simply fooled around and ran halfway through his session. Archie stayed silent, having a pre-planned emergency ten minutes in. Leanne stayed the entire time, talking of her greatness. Edward the elephant asked endless unrelated questions in his session. Nervously, he twitched and twirled his trunk. Everyone else dove in, opening up to both personal and professional coaching.

For example, Zelda the zebra described her dream of a work-home balance, that left her excited to be at both locations, not tired

and exhausted. She built a Personal Dream Statement in the Design Your Dream phase that brought a massive smile to the zebra.

She proceeded through the Reality Scan phase, Energizing Goals phase and now worked on building her SMART actions. (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Time-bound) Part of Zelda's action plan involved getting enough quality sleep. Part of her actions focused on creative ways to manage her career and home life, and part of her actions involved developing skills to lead a large scale transformation.

Also, Max spent a large portion of his time in the first two weeks with Zelda and the transformation team to build a solid foundation for a successful project. Once again, the DREAM model proved its worth in groups as well as with individuals. He used the DREAM model in the transformation team's first sessions to get them off to a great start. Plus, all the transformation team, except one, welcomed individual Dream Coaching. It assisted them in understanding what they must do in leading this massive undertaking.

Gracie the giraffe, who provided admin for the team, jumped at the coaching. She stretched herself in the Design Your Dream phase. Except, in the Reality Scan phase, her confidence dropped. A dark cloud hovered over the giraffe. Max probed with the questions, letting Gracie tell her troubling story.

Max guided her through a Detoxing Your Relationships exercise. The breakthrough occurred. Gracie spilled tears. She talked of her previous relationship where her towering partner abused her. He was still trying to contact her. Although, she showed outward confidence, the relationship, and his attempt to reconnect, left her scared and a scar inside the giraffe, effecting her internal confidence and overall well being.

Another difficult coaching session occurred with Rock. They were making progress on his Designing Your Dream phase. As they proceeded to the Reality Scan phase, Max took the rhino through a

personal SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) exercise. Rock began to sweat as they progressed. He started to cry as he confessed, “But my dreams and passions mean nothing. For-for I not only have poor eyesight. I’m losing that eyesight with all the screen use.”

Max led Rock through a process useful for anyone who’s grieving from a loss or potential loss. And Rock’s eyesight reduction was a big loss to the rhino. When they finished, Rock grinned. “For the first time in weeks since I realized what was happening, I feel hope. Thanks for the information.”

As Max’s coaching sessions with the execs unfolded, he received some information from them, and it was in regard to information. He became suspicious of the manner in which information flowed between Tag and his team. Therefore, he wanted to gain additional information about how the executives communicated. Time to have that chat with Sophia the snake.

Sophia weaved a complex, twisted, and somewhat slimy network to support her facade of control. Executive communications were often driven by the most senior executive’s assistant. Max was amazed at the power such an individual seemed to garner in many organizations. Jungle Tech was no different. Max wondered if the serpent would co-operate with him? Or would the serpent play her game, wriggling her flexible backbone, never committing to one solid position?

Max cruised down the executive wing, where Sophia awaited their scheduled meeting. Once again, he traveled too fast for his own good, oblivious of where he was going. First, his cane connected with a wet floor sign. Next, he slipped on that wet floor. Max groaned. Pain shot through his already feeble back. He rose slowly, checking to see if more than his pride was broken. Finding himself more or less intact, he sighed with relief.

Sitting at her desk Sophia witnessed Max's fall. She snickered and offered insincere condolences, "Oh sorry Max, I saw you coming down the hall. I guess I should have warned you."

When Sophia and Max settled in a small meeting room connected to Tag's office, the snake was itching to flaunt her power. "Normally, only Tag uses this room, but we can use it today."

"So, I guess you carry a bit of weight around here?"

"Someone has to keep them in line," said Sophia, all but wearing her arrogance on her silk sleeve.

"Guess you enjoy all that power?"

Sophia was rattled. Even blind, Max saw right through her. She realized she'd underestimated this monkey. She'd have to maintain the pretense of cooperation.

Max carried on "It's a tough role you have, performing a wide variety of activities on behalf of Tag."

"And the board members. They're always asking me for favors and info."

Max asked, "Even Leo the lion?"

"Well, not so much Leo, but the others. Mostly Garth and Tanya." Sophia paused and whispered, "You know. The three of us are tennis pals. That Garth is quite the player. I mean tennis, of course." Sophia sniggered. "And we all are very active on social media. But my pics are the best."

"You like to take selfies?"

"Tons. All I do after work." She sniggered. "And at work sometimes. And at the tennis club."

She carried on talking of her close relationship with Tanya the tigress, sharing some of their intimate secrets. "Tanya and I love to chat about her tennis game and Samson the Siberian tiger. Samson is the tennis pro down at the club. He's a master of the love game. Samson could sweep any female off their feet, if you like that suntanned, muscular, blue eyed kind of look. Tanya seems to like

that look, as a snake I much prefer rhinos to tigers. But I'm telling secrets. You're a smooth one. You really get a snake hissing."

"Let's talk about the executive team. Who does Tag interact with one-on-one?"

"Well, they have to get by me first."

"So, you control who Tag sees. Do you control what info Tag views?"

"Of course, I scan his emails and messages. Toss out any trash. And there's lots of that."

"Do you control who he talks to via phone as well?"

She winked. "When I can."

"Talk about face to face meetings for each exec Sophia."

" Well, Rock the rhino. He's always coming by with his figures. What a good-looking rhino. Real nice rhino too. Tag and Zelda spend a bit of time together. Zelda's usually just keeping Tag up to date on some customer issue. Tag doesn't snarl as much when Zelda's around. She calms everyone down."

"How about Growth Marketing?" Max asked.

"Leanne the leopard and Tag have limited communications. Leanne's awfully busy with constantly new marketing programs and all. She's smart. Don't know why so many hate her."

"How about Sales?"

"Now, Hal is just a character. Real party hyena. Fun all the way. I think he avoids Tag."

"How about the rest?"

"The other executives all come and chat with Tag about the same amount. Except, for Edward the elephant who only talks to Tag through texts and emails. Tag seems to be a little easier on Paula the parrot and Camilla the cougar. But he shouldn't be easy on Camilla. She's such a stuffy one. Now with Archie the ape, well that's another story. Tag tends to be yelling at Archie about bringing problems, never solutions. Archie can't seem to figure it out."

"When the executive team is in a group, what's it like?"

“They spend a lot of time setting up multimedia shows. Often the technology breaks.” She winked again. “They’re always criticizing each other’s presentations. I’ll give them one thing. They’re all improving their multimedia shows with all the pretty colors, animations, and cartoons. Does get boring between the extended shows, the fooling around by Hal, Archie, Edward and the rants that Tag goes on. That’s pretty much the meeting. Good I don’t let them have an agenda. They’d never follow it.”

“Do they ever get through the material on a particular item and make decisions?”

“Not very often Max. In the end I cut them off. It means we’re pressed for time and an important issue is decided very quickly or no decision is made. Or, Tag just gets mad and makes the call. But at least I get lots of pics with me in the middle of the team.”

“Thank you for the information, Sophia. As we proceed, we’ll need your help in making those meetings more effective.”

“Nothing needs to change.”

“Are you sure Sophia?”

“Well, I’ll have to check with the powers that be if we change anything,” said Sophia with a sly overtone.

“And when are you going to accept a coaching session invite. You’re part of the executive team.”

Sophia froze. “Ah, I-I’m not part of that coaching thing. No, no way.”

Sophia slithered off. She was in a hurry. Max heard Sophia dialing her cell phone. Definitely communicating, but with whom?

“Hi, Sophia here,” she whispered into her cell phone. “The monkey’s asking lots of questions. What do you want me to do?”

“Feed him any garbage,” Garth commanded. “But make sure you keep me up to speed on everything. I’ll be taking over one day. And as you know, receiving advanced communications is something I value.”

Sophia cleared her voice as she got the message. “Yes, sir. I understand.”

“When I take over I will look forward to working close, very close, with an incredibly sexy snake such as you. It could be good for your career and good for me.” The promiscuity in Garth’s voice was almost tangible. “And your social media layouts. Well, hah, hah, makes this gorilla feel like a jungle king.”

Sophia’s skin began to crawl. She felt this game was getting out of hand.

Chapter 10 – An Elephant’s Confession

Edward the elephant cruised in to work early in the morning at great cost. He’d weaved in and out of traffic in a vain attempt to pick up those precious seconds, vanishing like dust in the maw of a hurricane. He’d spilled his Grande Starbucks coffee and stopped off and purchased another. Having sent what felt like twenty messages on his phone while speeding along the highway. He’d almost missed his turnoff.

Also, the elderly Edward took the opportunity to talk to one of his staff. But the horrid reception made it impossible to hear what the baboon was saying. He strained his big ears. He decided it wasn’t worth it, hanging up, focusing instead on the harrowing commute.

The sorrows of Edward boiled down to a simple fact. His much younger coworkers didn’t get it. Not his wishes, nor the corporate world, nothing. His work force was composed of dithering idiots.

Edward liked to get in before the other animals and birds to avoid their idle and wasteful chitchat. Today he’d shut himself in his office and busy himself with completing the presentation for Tag.

Also, he'd analyze the monthly stats, conduct a little research on the web and play some online bridge.

Perhaps he thought I'd better cancel my coaching session with the monkey. For he'd managed to only meet with that monkey once since Max showed up two weeks ago. He hoped he could keep avoiding Max. Edward sent Max a message to cancel. This despite Max's proximity down the hall. But that would be an inordinate waste of time Edward assured himself.

Certainly, Edward knew that he could come across as a bit of an arrogant elephant with his knowledge of opera and fine wine, his brand new Hummer, and his membership in that exclusive polo club. He wore Armani suits, monogrammed Egyptian cotton shirts, and those overpriced Harry Rosen ties.

But the flashiness concealed unflattering truths. He needed the Hummer so he could fit comfortably behind the wheel. Armani was the only suit that could be tailored to fit his size. His monogrammed initials, EEE, were on his shirts because it was free with the custom made shirts he needed to fit his girth. He used to be EEE III. But since his grandfather and father died tragically in the Ivory War, he simply called himself Edward Earl Elephant, rather than Edward Earl Elephant the Third.

Some truths were hard, and Edward masked the pain with operas, polo, wine, and luxuries his ancestors had been unable to enjoy. He never wanted anyone to know where he truly came from or how shaky his personal finances were. He dreaded idle chitchat, for it might give up the truth.

Max poked his head in the elephant's office. "Hi Edward. We set aside time for us to meet. Why are you canceling?"

Edward addressed him with his firmest tone, "One minute, I'm frightfully busy." He changed his screen from yesterday's polo scores to a spreadsheet. "Isn't it apparent old boy from my message?"

"No, it isn't."

“Important presentation to prepare for Tag. He admires the style of my decks.”

“You take a lot of pride in your shows?”

Edward stuck out his chest. “I may be an old elephant. But I pride myself on my multi media shows. Any leader worth his salt in today’s business jungle better be proficient with the multi media tools.”

“You mentioned some important research in your message. What’s the purpose of this research Edward? How does this issue fit in with Jungle Tech’s strategic direction?”

Giving a look of disgust, Edward said, “It’s obvious that this research will be vital one day. Can’t you see it?”

“No! What’s obvious is you’re making excuses? Tell me why you are so nervous about this second coaching session?”

“After our first coaching session, I, well, almost spilled the beans.” Edward paused and mumbled, “Max old boy, I am a terrible communicator.”

“With time and effort your communications will improve. Why don’t you relax and let’s talk?”

This would be the lengthiest face-to-face exchange Edward would have all week. He was a bright elephant who had progressed a long way at Jungle Tech due to his technical brilliance. Except, he was right about his communication skills.

Also, Max realized that Edward was a typical victim of working primarily while in a frazzled state. The often frantic and ineffective multitasking in the contemporary jungle. Exemplified by the monkey Max heard that morning, swinging through the trees, while sending numerous texts and eating a banana. The effect on the animals was that they would sometimes forget important details, not focus on the truly important business, and be left frazzled at the end of the day. This took an emotional toll on the animals, effecting both their work and personal lives.

Max began asking Edward questions concerning his passions and life. Edward's answers were natural and spontaneous. He began to feel the spark of a dream. A message came in from Edward's wife. His trunk stiffened. His ears went straight in the air. His eyes went wide. "Max, I must not proceed. If my wife knew what I'm dreaming of, she'd have my hide."

Chapter 11 – Resistance In The Jungle

Over Max's two weeks at Jungle Tech so far, there stood three executives that felt upset about the coaching and the transformation. They met for a chat. "Hal and Leanne, I'm gonna fight this damn change stuff," boasted Archie. "Watch me crush that monkey."

"My resistance will be more sophisticated," Leanne said.

"Nothing will be sophisticated about my resistance," declared Hal. "No, monkey's changing me. This sales exec got his education surviving in the gutter. My smile hides what I really think."

The next afternoon Hal the hyena called Max in his office. He spoke with a firm tone, "Look little monkey. I don't buy into all this crap. I'm a smooth walking, fast talking, selling machine, and I know what I'm doing. That's where it ends."

"What do you mean Hal?"

"I'm here to sell. Maybe we'll get into transforming some things. But until I see it in my commissions, all B.S. to me. I get paid to sell."

A greedy one, thought Max. Only thinks of himself.

Hal continued, "I don't have to be involved. I can talk and sell anybody anything."

"I think you're good at selling. Are you also a good Sales VP?"

“As long as Tag, Leo, or the big guy Garth thinks so. It really doesn’t matter, whether I am or not.”

“I could spend my time trying to convince you of the value of transformation and coaching. But that’d waste both your time and mine.”

“You’re getting the picture blind monkey.”

“If I’d tried to have it mandated by Tag or Leo or someone, you’d give them some lies why it’s not working for you?”

“Damn right! I’d out maneuver you. I’m the best office politician you’ll ever see.”

“You only can get by so long on the political trail. Your sales results aren’t great and lagging behind the competition. Might eventually catch up to you. But okay, so if I let you off on your individual coaching, will you cooperate with the rest of the Jungle Tech transformation. Back it as best as you can, whatever that entails? In other words, please try to limit your overt sabotage.”

“I could. But as you’ve picked up, I’ve been known to lie.” Hal laughed hilariously.

Max shrugged his shoulders. “Well, if that’s the best we’re going to get. Good enough for me.”

“I see we have an understanding,” said Hal with a winner smirk on his face.

“Guess we do. Oh, I forgot to mention. An additional component has been added to each of the executive bonus plans. It is a transformation incentive. Paula will roll it out in the next couple of days. Guess you’ll get the appropriate amount. Zero sounds right.”

Hal leapt out of his chair, the smirk wiped off his face. “What the hell da you mean? How much is this worth?”

“You’ll get your share if you earn it.”

Hal objected, “I’m a busy.”

“Pipe down. Save your bullshit for someone else. You could be a great Sales executive. But you can’t take it to the next level until

you learn to listen. This stuff you call crap might be enough to take you to the next level. I'll say it again. You've the most to gain financially from a transformed Jungle Tech."

The habitual smile vanished from Hal. No one had ever been this blunt with him. He felt pissed. He remembered one of those marriage counsellors tried to tell him he didn't listen, and he was selfish, but never as blunt as this. He couldn't remember which counsellor it was, or even which marriage it was. But he'd heard it before. Maybe this monkey was right. But he still felt pissed.

Max carried on, "Instead of fuming at me and thinking about your revenge. You should be asking yourself what you need to do, and then do it."

Hal sneered. "I hate you, you little monkey." Then he paused and said, "But I see your point."

"You're a smart one. How about if I book a coaching session to focus on you and the transformation?"

"I'll talk transformation. But nothing else." Hal shuffled. "I'm all about the cash."

The following afternoon, Max conducted his second coaching session with Archie the ape. The first coaching session with Archie was like pulling large fangs. The second was going much the same. Archie bodily attended this second session. But that was all, spiritually and mentally, he was elsewhere.

According to Archie, everybody else possessed major problems as executives, but not him. Max wondered just how Archie climbed to where he was in the organization? He'd some of his own apelike concepts and qualities, which he espoused. Of course, he thought he was the smartest and strongest in the entire jungle.

"If executives are supposed to waste time trying to improve themselves or change stuff, I'm not one of those. I don't listen to anyone. I don't listen to customers and animals that work for me. I tell them what to do. And any birds better stay clear of me."

Max explored more on listening, hoping one of his questions would spark something positive in the ape.

Archie blurted out his frustration with the basic communication concepts, “I don’t need to listen to others. Not even my wife. It’s just gibberish coming out of their mouths anyway.” Archie grunted and snorted. “In fact, you’ve wasted more of my time with talk, than anyone has in years.”

“Does that make you feel angry Archie?”

“I don’t get angry. I get what I want.”

“So you don’t listen or change anything. Any chance that could change?”

“Never, little monkey. What you see is what you get. Oh, you can’t see me.” That sent Archie into an extended fit of laughter while he thumped his desk.

Max accepted an invitation to one of Leanne the leopard’s Growth Marketing team meetings two days later. Leanne packed her team into a crowded room. He heard a pill bottle shake, and a swallow. Then it was lights, camera, action. She flung lots of slides and lots of info, even funky jungle music to fill the air while the show unfolded. It all saved Leanne from speaking. Ironically, it was a first class presentation in Leanne’s mind.

Prior to Leanne getting started she whispered in Max’s ear, “The other executives pale in comparison to my presentation skills. Watch how a future president handles this crowd.”

Leanne whizzed through the presentation. She demanded the group hold their questions until the end. Max could detect her dependence on the slide deck. Leanne’s deck was a crutch, not a utility to her. Also, she talked at the group, dictating her speech as though to a scribe, rather then building some semblance of conversation or dialogue.

The crowd was left dumbfounded. Leanne inundated them with content without giving them the opportunity to internalize any of

that content. Some of the questions that arose among the participants were forgotten by the end of the presentation. Nor did it appear that Leanne desired their input or concurrence. The only semblance of dialogue was Leanne giving the compulsory invitation for questions, only to be met with silence. Of course, she concluded there were no questions because the information was crystal clear.

She wrapped up, holding her head high. “You can clap now.” She basked in the half hearted applause.

Max found Leanne a bright executive, but a poor communicator. She had the "me" syndrome. She related almost everything to herself. This made it a challenge for her to connect on an individual basis or in a group. He could feel the tension in the room. He wondered how many knew the secret she was ashamed of?

Leanne whispered in Max’s ear as she passed on her way out, “I guess you can see I need no improvement in the executive area. I should be teaching the other executives, even Tag.”

Despite the obstacles with Hal, Archie and Leanne, Max worked through the waves of coaching sessions. The others continued to progress through the DREAM model, progressing on their professional life, progressing on their personal life, and genuinely connecting with the dream of Jungle Tech being number one. But how much resistance could these three resistors generate?

Chapter 12 - Where’s The Connection

As part of Tag’s Action Stepping Stones phase, specific actions on developing listening and intuition were part of it. Max encouraged Tag to tap into what his intuition told him. To do that, Tag needed to utilize his tactile sense to a greater extent. One of the

actions involved Max, along with his regular golf guide, taking Tag to the golf course on a Saturday morning.

Max blindfolded Tag and had him do some putting with the assistance of the sighted golf guide. Max pushed Tag to feel the putter. The tiger was a disaster at first, but as he began to feel the putting stroke, he nailed a 12 foot putt. Lesson one in finding intuition was a success.

Tag would now have to learn to use his intuition where appropriate. He didn't have to live by it, but did have to understand its signals. Intuition was the role of the subconscious within the decision process, and therefore an asset to a leader when used properly.

After Tag removed the blindfold, the two played 18 holes, with Tag coming off the predictable winner, but not by a ton. "Max, you gave me a run for my money! You're like a robot. Your golf guide sets you up and then you connect."

"The golf guide's a big part of it," agreed Max. "We're a team. I went out with a new guide last month. On the first hole I took 9 swings off the tee before I connected. And then the ball just dribbled a few feet down the fairway."

"Those were just practice swings."

Max chuckled and confessed, "Sure, along with the 6 practice swings I'd already taken."

Later in the clubhouse, Tag sat in a pensive mood. "I wish I'd discovered this active listening and intuition a long time ago. Maybe Tanya's right. She said I wasn't listening to her. Also didn't feel things the way I should have. But unfortunately, like I said before, it's too late."

"Are you sure it's too late?"

"We hardly ever talk now. She's so wrapped up in the club and whatever else. I've got Jungle Tech. As you know, one of my goals is to connect with Tanya again. I tried to connect with her last night and thought for a second that maybe I could. Then it was like she

thought of something or someone else, and the shield was up again. Guess I deserve it for my inattentiveness over the last years."

Monday morning and Sophia posted her latest selfies, when she received a call from Tanya the Tigris. "Hi Sophia. How are things?"

"Hi Tanya. Things are fine."

"Can't be easy working for that know-it-all husband of mine, and boss of yours?"

"All bosses are pretty much the same. All think they're gods. Now what about you?"

"Things are just peachy. Especially when I'm at the club."

"And how's your game Tanya?"

"Which one? Oh, you mean tennis." Tanya laughed, "Still awful, but who cares. Love to play anyway. Maybe all those lessons will pay off one day."

"Keep it up Tanya, and one of these days you'll score big."

"Hope so. Must get around to business. King Tag said you'd some papers for me to sign. What a pain. Can you drop around the club on your way home? I'll take care of it? We can have a cocktail. You'll get to feast your eyes on our yummy tennis pro."

"Sounds great. I'm all for that feasting stuff." Sophia sniggered like a teenage snake. "How do you concentrate on tennis with that Samson the Siberian tiger around?"

"Who concentrates on tennis? But seriously Sophia, Samson's a great tiger. We connect at another level. He makes me laugh. He's so bad sometimes. Maybe all the time."

"He is a bad one," stated Sophia. "Tag sure doesn't think much of him."

"Well, at least I connect with Samson. Tag and I connect at no level. He never listens to me, and we hardly even touch any more. At least Samson listens and, well, I suppose he has no choice when

you're paid by the hour." "What's his highness doing today? Probably chatting with that blind monkey that I've heard about."

"They're always talking Tanya. I swear that Tag has changed since Max showed up. He actually listens. Doesn't roar and snarl as much. Actually smiles. Doesn't act like he knows everything. Tag's connecting with all the animals and birds. Becoming a better leader."

"I'll believe it when I see it."

"But Tanya, I'm pissed at the way my power's shrinking. The better the execs get. The less I manipulate them. Even Tag."

"Don't worry. Don't think my husband will ever be much. Wish Tag could be more like Garth the gorilla. Now there's a leader. Garth has an answer for everything and is so classy to boot. He chums with Samson, you know. Garth's the only reason I can stand those dreadful board meetings with Leo and Tag. At least Garth tries to connect with me."

Sophia thought about Tanya and how she seemed to have changed. Gone was the spark in her eye and lilt in her voice. Except when she talked of Samson and the club. She seemed to be more and more like her father everyday. This made Sophia sad. Tanya was born into an influential, wealthy and powerful family in Asia. She was bright enough and educated at the finest schools at home and abroad. Her social circle once included movie stars, rock stars, and royalty from around the world. She was a paparazzi darling. But she gave it all up for love.

Long ago she said she wasn't really happy until she met Tag. Tag showed her how to have fun and enjoy life. He was the first person who truly loved her. Her father didn't approve of Tag, who was not of a pure bloodline. He'd told Tanya that if she married Tag, not only would he never speak to her again, but he'd disown her. Tanya didn't care. She loved Tag and gave it all up so she could spend her life with him. Besides, Tag was able to provide for her,

and she was quickly accepted into an entire new circle of friends when they moved from Asia to the jungle.

But something changed. Tanya was becoming distant and was craving attention. Sophia knew that Tanya called the paparazzi to see if they were interested in what she was up to, and was disappointed that they weren't. She started spending more and more time at the club, and hence with Samson and less with Tag. She was spending more and more time with her shrink. But most of all, she was spending more and more time in the lounge, drinking. The only good thing that Sophia could see was that Tanya would check herself into rehab for the attention.

Sophia's thoughts drifted to her own love life. She had to take every opportunity to rattle that infatuated cougar. Purposely, Sophia wore a sexy little red outfit today that was sure to connect her curvaceous shape to Rock's eyes, and sure to get Camilla's cougar blood boiling.

Chapter 13 – Executive Glue

An hour later, Tag, Rock and Camilla talked in a meeting when Sophia paraded in, handing Rock some docs he'd requested. All but giving him a lap dance in the process. "Will there be anything else Rock?" It was clear she wanted there to be.

Rock fell prey to that other form of a 'visual trap.' His eyes were glued to Sophia's vivacious package. If looks could kill, Camilla's glare would have laid Sophia out cold in an instant. But all the cougar could do was fume inside, swearing it was time to leap into action.

After calming down, Camilla took Max aside a couple of days later. “Max, may I have a moment of your time for an unscheduled coaching session?”

“Absolutely, Camilla. What can I do for you?”

Camilla cleared her voice and spoke with a hesitant tone, “Wanted to gain some of your counsel on a rather sensitive issue. Hook on and let’s proceed to my office.”

The two settled in Camilla’s comfortable surroundings when she said, “I want to ensure everything we say is in complete confidence?”

“Most definitely.”

“Do you recall in my last coaching session, you asked me why in the majority of instances I’m quite formal or professional in regards to my oral communications? Except, occasionally, I become extremely flustered. Especially with the executive team.”

Max nodded his head in affirmation.

“In your experience Max, can one’s feelings cloud one’s objectivity towards their job and communication? Even how they act? Particularly in a group?”

“Of course,” replied Max. “Tell me more.”

“When I’m with the executive group, my mind tends to focus on someone other than the issue at hand. My entire thought process suffers.” Camilla paused to compose herself. She squirmed in her chair, fiddled with her hair, and reapplied her lipstick. Almost a minute passed before she spoke, “I’m a professional. I pride myself on my objectivity. It is as if I have glue in my mouth and I become tongue-tied.” Camilla held her head in her paws, her voice breathy with exasperation. “I can’t believe it. I’ve always been so logical. This is embarrassing.”

“Shows you’re a real cougar. Nothing wrong with that. And feelings need to be expressed to be validated.”

“I could never do that Max. I have been thinking of departing Jungle Tech, departing the jungle.”

“Thank you for sharing this. Please give this some time. You’re a key part of Jungle Tech. One thing. Is there anything different you’d like to do in your life? We were about to move into building your energizing goals. Time to widen our scope outside of your professional goals. Can we go back to the Wheel Of Life exercise you completed in an earlier session?”

“Yes, Max.” Camilla put a paw on her chin. “Interesting. You kept asking me to think about my balance. Which I was so sure of?”

“Might be simple as a new hobby, trip, new club, or charity work? Might take your mind off of the problem. This isn’t an uncommon occurrence for workaholics.”

“Let me consider that thought. You are correct that I’m a workaholic. I think that’s due to the fact when I immigrated, I had few friends, and worked extremely hard attempting to prove myself. You have spoken of a balance in life. I ignored you. Time for me to change. Thank you, you’ve given me something to ponder other then revenge.”

Tag recognized some of Sophia’s counter productive actions in regard to executive communications. One of his actions was to make changes in that area. That very day, he talked to Sophia, requesting she change her approach. He asked Sophia to work with Paula and Max on the issue. Sophia raged inside. If she had legs, she’d have charged after Paula and Max immediately. But instead, Sophia slinked off, darting her tongue in and out, ready to strike when the time was right, wanting a huge piece of a certain parrot and monkey.

Both Tag and Max wanted Paula to be a key in facilitating the executive team’s communication. She was going to be the executive glue that held the team together, helping to connect the team. But Paula must tap into strength she didn’t know she possessed.

Paula scheduled two hours with Max to discuss how the executive team communicated as a group. Right off, Paula began

singing the prettiest song about the wonderful things Tag did in the area.

"Tag's beginning to make some needed changes," said Max. "Now first off, we need one executive to assist Tag by becoming the glue for this team."

"What about Sophia?"

"Different from Sophia's role. And Tag's talked to Sophia about some of her slippery power play tricks. She wasn't happy about it. But said she'd work with whomever becomes this executive glue."

Paula chirped, "What does this glue executive do?"

"In addition to their regular executive responsibilities they take on a facilitation role when the team is meeting. Usually it's not a leader, since they tend to be engaged with the issues. It's that special executive in and out of the meeting that ensures effective communication flow and binds the team."

"Sounds like a challenging role," remarked Paula.

"Can be. But you could do it."

Max talked of his past where he many times played the role of executive glue. "It's a thankless job. When you're doing it right, and the team is operating at its optimum, you're not the one in the lime light. Only with good reason are you front and center. And then you need to be strong."

"Can't see myself doing that." The hesitation in her voice was palpable.

"You have what it takes," stated Max. "But you have to want it. You'll have to continue to work on your assertiveness. You'll have to promote trust within the team."

"That's tough with this group. Will they ever really trust each other?" Trusting the wrong animals, or even the wrong birds, can get one killed in the jungle, thought Paula. She'd have to watch her wings. And trusting that reptile Sophia, could be the end of her.

"We have to mobilize this team towards trusting each-other. It's critical to the effectiveness of any team."

Paula sighed. "Unfortunately, our team sits at major distrust."

Paula received a call on her cell. When the call ended, the parrot was distracted. She asked as she hopped about, "Can we reschedule? I need to fly."

"On one condition. You'll help me facilitate a discussion with the executive team on improving their group communications?"

Paula agreed and took flight, but had no idea what she was in for.

Chapter 14 - Disrupting The Communication Lines

Two days later, Max led the executive group through the DREAM process with a focus on their communications. Not surprising, Sophia, Leanne, Hal and Archie insisted things were fine the way they were. But the rest knew different.

Max heard Leanne pop another pill and announced, "I know everything there is to know about communications, and we need no improvements."

Rock interjected on this endless stream of resistance, "There's a poem called The Rock. In that poem there's a line that goes, all our knowledge brings us closer to our ignorance. It may well apply to us."

Silence filled the room as each leader digested this information in their own way. Mostly they understood. Archie exhibited typical ape like behavior when he laughed and ridiculed Rock for quoting poetry. This, of course, made Camilla come to Rock's defense as she

thought how wonderful it was that Rock did have other interests than his numbers. Maybe there was hope for her yet.

Sophia watched Camilla admiring the muscular Rock. She thought she may have to attack Camilla in a much more subtle snake like manner. She could take her out of the picture, pardon the visual pun, without her even knowing. This snake was smooth in more ways than one.

Other then the initial resistance, and the dagger eyes shooting between a cougar and a snake, the meeting progressed well. Paula would now take on the challenge of executive team communications. The DREAM model produced a goal and actions that would assist her.

Except, at the end of the meeting, Leanne and Archie took a couple of inappropriate shots at Paula's Animal Resource area. Max managed to cut them off, but not in time. Their intent was to ruffle Paula's feathers. It worked. Silently, Sophia cheered on the planned attack on the parrot.

Paula flew from the meeting in shock. She was thankful that she couldn't form real tears, or she'd have been crying. She took a lot of pride in her work. As Paula departed the meeting Leanne shouted out, "Paula, just face the fact that no one likes you."

Paula began shaking and took flight while repeating, "I quit, I quit, I quit!"

After the meeting, Leanne, Archie and Hal huddled in the leopard's office. The door was closed and voices were low. Very hush, hush.

Archie gave Hal a high-five and grunted, "Mission accomplished. As I always say, if communications can be disrupted, the battle's won."

The three chuckled. Leanne said in her confident manner, "Paula will always choose the middle option when it comes to: fight, flight or flow."

Hal held forth, his grin fixed eternally in place. “Leanne, you should be in charge here. I’m backing you all the way. We make a great team. You got the brains. Archie got the muscle and I got the charm.”

Leanne smacked her tail on the floor. “Garth already knows the fact, and when Leo finally admits that Tag is incompetent, I’ll be the perfect replacement. I have more knowledge than anyone else on the executive. I’m the obvious choice for President.”

“You sure are,” agreed Hal. “Behind you all the way.” The sexist Hal thought it wasn’t her skill on the job but probably her other assets that would get her promoted.

Archie scratched himself. “Tag’s a fool. Just look what’s goin on with his wife down at the club. He ain’t gotta clue.”

“Tag’s an idiot,” Leanne declared.

“You’ll make a great president,” said Hal smiling. “You seem to know it all.”

Leanne was determined to be president of some company. She’d do anything to get there. She and her sister competed over everything. Leanne always won. Leanne thought she knew more, looked better, was more popular, was richer and was more successful than her spoiled sister. But that sister of hers was enjoying too much success in her own career. Desperately, Leanne needed to show her who was better, one more time.

Chapter 15 - Reach Out And Touch Someone

Max scheduled a meeting with Paula later that day. After some frank discussion, she decided to stay on at Jungle Tech. To give a shot to her confidence, he used a tool called Boosting Your Strengths. But first, he used a prioritizing exercise called, Urgent-

Important. It was to help Paula focus on the important actions, and not react without thought, hopping to everyone else's tune, everyone else's urgent requests.

After completing the two exercises, Paula declared, “I want to be the glue for this executive team.”

“Excellent!”

The two took several minutes to build plans for Paula’s expanded role.

The door burst open. Leanne paraded in like a tornado. “Paula, I have an urgent issue. I am not getting reimbursed for my bar tab at the tennis club. Finance sent me to you.”

“You interrupted me for that Leanne? Can it not wait until I’m done?”

Leanne put her nose in the air and snorted. “You brainless over-weight bird. I want this fixed now.”

Paula replied in a calm voice, “Those comments were uncalled for Leanne. I’ll come and see you and we can deal with this when I’m finished my scheduled meeting with Max. This issue can be dealt with when we’re done. I understand it’s important to you, but my meeting with Max isn’t over.”

Leanne stormed out of the room muttering under her breath. There was a silence, and then Paula spoke, “I’m shaking. I’ve never stood up to Leanne before.”

“You were marvelous! Take a few deep breaths and relax.”

Paula shut her eyes for a few minutes and calmed herself. “Max, thank you for getting me into yoga and meditation. Please go on. I’m all right. I’m starting to feel good about myself. Maybe I’ll be a stronger glue than I think when facing that opposition.”

Much of that opposition was secretly fueled by Garth, and the gorilla just arrived at Jungle Tech. Except, he was about to face a little opposition of his own. Arrogantly, Garth strutted through the reception area of Jungle Tech. Abruptly, he halted in front of Gracie

the giraffe, smiled, and turned his lewd charm on full blast. “I never noticed you before. You’re a tall and beautiful giraffe.“ He reached over and stroked Gracie’s long neck. “You could rise to even greater heights if I were Chair of the Board.” He delivered another slime filled stroke of her neck.

Gracie gave Garth a look that could kill and pulled away. She took a calming breath, gaining strength from the fact she’d addressed this issue in her coaching session. She fired back, “If you ever touch or speak to me in that manner again, you’ll never walk upright again!”

Garth should have been taking charm lessons from Samson the Siberian tiger. For over at the tennis club at that moment, Samson’s charm revved in overdrive. “Samson you’re such a character,” spoke Tanya with her seductive voice as she reached out and gently touched his big broad shoulder, leaving her paw there forever, sending a stimulating spark through her body. “You make me laugh. Now let’s get back to tennis.” But Tanya’s true focus stayed on that ripped tiger. She wondered, why did his firm muscles make her knees weak? Why did his beautiful backend have to be so yummy?

Samson watched her devouring eyes, and felt her hot touch. He’d waited for a strong signal such as this. For now, he could move to the next step.

Chapter 16 – Sense The Potential

“Max, I’m sensing a dramatic change in the way my team is communicating,” said Tag as the two were out on a working walk. “Are you hypnotizing them? I know I’m communicating differently

myself. Starting to really listen. Hey, you've probably been hypnotizing me too."

It'd been a frantic first month for Max. The majority of the executives and transformation team were clamoring for more of his time for Dream Coaching. The majority of them were growing as leaders.

"Most of your executive team and the transformation team worked extremely hard," Max congratulated Tag. "Keeping it up over the long run is the real challenge. The executive team is off to a good start to spite the underlying resistance."

"Zelda, Rock, Paula and Camilla are growing in leaps and bounds. Even Edward's trying. He's accepted his shortcomings in communications. Paula's improvement has been amazing. She's taken hold and is driving our team communications to new heights."

"I'm thrilled with their progress Tag. Just give them the right exposure and opportunities. You know Zelda could be a great TIC (Temporary in Charge) for yourself."

Zelda and Max spent countless hours on the transformation project. It was obvious to Max, she was an amazing leader. Also, Zelda was the mother of four. She wrestled with the challenges of work-home balance. In one of the coaching sessions, Max guided her through an exercise called, Anxiety Busting. Also, he got her started on journaling, and her worry time dropped dramatically. Even her left ear twitch stopped.

She completed all five phases of the DREAM model first, finalizing her dreams, goals and actions. Her leadership of the Customer Success team and transformation team rocked, demonstrating her incredible and hitherto untapped potential.

Back in The Designing Your Dream phase of Zelda's Dream Coaching, Max asked Zelda if she'd ever aspire to be a president of a company? Not just Jungle Tech. She knew all about the glass ceiling. So, she didn't get too excited. And she loved working for Jungle Tech and Tag.

“Zelda’s talented and a great mother too,” Tag declared and chuckled. She has pictures of all her cute cubs everywhere. They all look alike, and she dresses them in those horizontal striped outfits. Tag halted. “But as far as her potential, we’re on the same page Max. Zelda could be a fantastic successor as President. You never know. If Garth the gorilla gets his way, I’ll be out of here!”

At the same time Tag and Max were having their walk and talk, Garth and Tanya enjoyed a quiet drink at the club. Garth said with enthusiasm, “That Samson is quite a fellow. He’s not just a great tennis pro. He’s smart too.”

“Smart? Really?” Tanya raised her eyebrows in surprise. “Have you known Samson long?”

“Years. We’re buds. Go back a long way. He gives great business advice. You may want to listen to him.”

“Great tiger! Tons of fun. He looks too good to be a smart business type,” purred Tanya as she blushed. “I’ll have to listen a little harder to what he has to say.” Tanya wondered, how could a male look that incredibly yummy and have brains too?

“Well, of course, he doesn’t have the knowledge that I do,“ Garth boasted. “But well, few do. Well, actually no one does.” Garth issued his irritating smug laugh. “But Samson has lots of potential.”

“How would you rank my husband as a business leader?”

“Tag tries hard. But.”

“How about Leo?” Tanya asked. “He always seems to predict the future.”

“Leo’s lucky. I’m the true visionary in this jungle. And he’s so vulgar.”

“Leo sure’s made a lot of money,” remarked Tanya. “Seems to come up with pretty creative ideas.”

Garth fumed underneath. Leo’s skills and success were a sensitive topic with him. But he needed to keep his cool. “Business is changing. The jungle needs more refined and cultured leaders.

Even Jungle Tech needs to be led by the right sort. If we want to move forward."

"Never thought about it. I do wish Leo and Tag were more refined."

"They don't even belong to the club. Here is where the movers and shakers are. Look at me. How successful I am. Now let's have another drink and talk about the tennis pro, ah I mean your tennis game Tanya."

As Tanya talked about her tennis lessons, Garth watched the door. Soon Tanya realized she didn't have Garth's attention. As she turned around, Samson the Siberian tiger entered the lounge. Sometimes, I wish he would wear looser clothing thought Tanya. He looks so perfect, so hunky delicious, such a strong virile tiger. Besides, Garth said he was smart. She thought about Tag for a moment. But her lusting eyes remained focused on Samson.

Garth smiled to himself. His plan was unfolding. It was a sex crazed and sleazy jungle. Garth loved it that way.

Chapter 17 - Changing The Animals And Birds

Paula and Gracie held a productive and spirited meeting on the transformation project that evening, when Archie the ape bounded into Paula's office with a stern look on his face. "Paula, this stupid transformation's a waste of our time," he grunted out and beat his chest.

"What are you grumbling about now?" Paula asked with an assertive tone Archie hadn't expected. He'd expected her to quiver under his intimidating gaze and chest thumping.

"You tell Tag that this blind monkey is trouble," commanded Archie.

“That’s not true. The only thing I’ll tell Tag is how great this transformation will be for Jungle Tech,” stated Paula. “You always fight changes in the jungle. You, of all creatures, should know that change is the cornerstone to evolution. Certainly you can support that.”

Archie was taken aback. But he’d keep on fighting. “Change makes me damn mad, and when I get mad I play rough.” Then Archie glared at a transformation book on Paula’s desk. Archie pointed at the book. “Reading’s for losers. I never read and I know lots.”

“You’d be wise to read it,” Paula suggested.

Archie shook his head. “I ain’t ever gonna read, and I ain’t ever gonna change.”

Gracie jumped in and said sarcastically, “Oh Archie, thanks for all your help in getting the current state transformation info for your area. It got in just on time.”

“How’d the hell you get it? I told ‘em not to co-operate.”

“Got it in spite of your resistance,” Gracie said over Archie’s stony, querulous gaze. “I went directly to your managers. They were more than willing to help. You’re supposed to be a positive role model. Or are you only programmed to fight change?”

“There’s other execs that see things my way and will fight this transformation. Just wait till the right board members take up my cause.”

Archie hurled the book on transformation to the floor, storming out of the office, making sure to slam the door. From behind that door, he finished with a thunderous chest beating session, followed by an out-of-shape ape coughing session, sending Gracie and Paula into fits of laughter.

Max contemplated his first month at Jungle Tech. The foundation was set. The political lines were drawn and would continue to be re-drawn. Time for the transformation team to drive

the project at a faster pace. Except, the success of the transformation team would be directly related to how destructive those politics would become, and to the degree each executive could make their own positive work related changes.

Archie could make no positive change so far. Many executives were making positive work related changes, and as in every transformation, a few of the executives were exploring meaningful changes in their personal life. One of those executives was Rock the rhino.

The first personal change already occurred for Rock. He strutted in to Max's workspace and declared, "I've made all the changes you and my eye doctor recommended in regard to Computer Vision syndrome. Wearing these antiglare glasses really helped!" Rock touched the new specs on his head. "Plus, changing the glare on my screens, sitting back two feet and at the right angle from the screens, proper breaks, keeping my eyes moist, and so on. My vision has stabilized. Thank you so much Max."

Also, Rock was contemplating another personal change, but he needed to analyze more on change. Rock was shy and shuffled his feet like a boy asking a girl on his first date, having no idea of the effect he had on the jungle females. He had chiseled good looks, was fit, dressed well, and paid little attention to the females around him. This apparent disinterest seemed to fuel the excitement. Max was aware that Sophia and Camilla were vying for his attention, upping their efforts.

What Max didn't know was that Rock's mother rejected him at birth, and he'd been rescued by one of the humans' 'Save the Rhino' Foundations. He was raised by humans and then released back into the jungle. A survivor, still he was lonely. He'd never felt the closeness of a family. Rock loved his numbers. Numbers were safe. Numbers wouldn't hurt you. But he was starting to want something more. Also, Rock was the benefactor of several 'Save the Rhino'

Organizations. He spent most of his spare time trying to trace his family roots, hoping to find someone that would understand him.

Nervously, Rock cleared his throat and inquired, “Max, I’ve been thinking about changes in my relationships. I’ve shut you down when it came up in our earlier sessions. But I’m ready to think differently. Tell me about personal change.”

Max thought that he’d have to give Rock some change theory, and let him go away to process it. Then, on another occasion, Rock may open up about the specific issue.

“Change may be different for each individual and the manner in which we deal with it. But we all live it on a day to day basis. One thing we can count on is the fact that change is a major part of our life. Healthy animals and birds change and grow.”

Rock further inquired, “Is each situation different?”

“The depth, breadth and pace of change is adjusted to optimize the effectiveness of each situation, whether for an individual or an organization. In our personal lives, we make decisions on the depth we’ll go to, the breadth it will take on, and finally the pace of change. In our personal life, being realistic is critical in tackling any intervention, as well as our degree of control.”

Rock received a message with an emoji of a smiley face from Sophia. “Hi handsome, need your signature.”

Rock blushed. “I guess our response to the change is affected by how we perceive it?”

“Yes, Rock, the way we respond to change is dependent on whether we perceive it as a positive or negative change. If the change is perceived as negative, we tend to go through the following responses or phases: Perceived Stability, Immobilization, Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, Testing, and Acceptance.”

“But what if we initially perceive the change as positive?” Rock asked with a heightened sense of excitement.

Max smiled. “If the change is perceived as positive, then we tend to respond as follows: Uninformed Optimism or Certainty, Informed Pessimism or Doubt, Hopeful Realism or Hope, Informed Optimism or Confidence, and Complete Satisfaction.”

“Will I go through all those steps with each change?”

“Important to realize that we don’t always go through them in a linear fashion. We often cycle back to previous ones. Not everyone completes the process, often leaving them disconnected and out of sorts.”

“I sure feel disconnected and out of sorts,” confessed Rock. Then he pondered for a moment on the new feelings he was discovering in relation to wanting to be close to someone special. “I may want to make some changes in my life. But I’m nervous about getting started. Could you help me?”

“For sure Rock! But you might have to push your comfort level. There may just be some untapped treasures awaiting you.”

That evening Tanya attended a sub committee meeting for the Jungle Tech board. After it ended, she gave Sophia a call and exclaimed, “That meeting was terribly dull. Except, for getting swept off my paws by Rock! He should be a model. Such a sexy cylindrical body, Such a distinct horn. He’s sparked my interest in Jungle Tech’s financials.”

“And he even looks hotter in his antiglare glasses,” Sophia said. “He’s so yummy. I could just eat him up.”

“I wonder if Rock likes to play? I now have a true motivation for being part of the board.”

Sophia hissed, “Hands off, pussy cat. I’ve got big plans for that shy rhino. I’m already fighting off a persnickety old cougar. But let’s just say some knowledge will accidentally fall into Rock’s hands that should put her out of the running.”

Chapter 18 – Making Sense Of It All

Max admitted to Zelda that same evening, “I’ve stalled you and your transformation team long enough. Let’s get going on that key item in your transformation model: strategic planning. The executive team is as ready as they’ll ever be. You and your transformation team have done an amazing job of moving forward without the key element.”

Zelda smiled. “Yes, we were getting impatient. But I figured you’d good reason. Now it all makes sense. There’s been a ton of key foundation work completed to this point. We’ve a much better perspective on our current state. We’ve gathered enlightening customer information and conducted the staff survey. The as-is process maps are ready. We took baseline measurements and did industry bench marking. We’ve trained the core team on the transformation methodology. We even have a skills inventory. We’ve the project director well established and now have high level project plans for the transformation project. It’s been an active month.”

“A ton of valuable work Zelda.”

“But none more important then the Dream Coaching you’ve done with each member of the transformation team, except the one that refused. But the rest grew under your guidance.”

“Fantastic team to work with,” Max stated. “Now, it is time to plan like we’ve never planned before.”

“All right,” whooped Zelda, “let’s get going.”

“Like your spirit Zelda. Now, how about we call in Gracie and give her the news? She’s still at work.”

A few minutes later, Gracie pranced in the room with that engaging smile and spoke first, “All right what did I do now?”

“Just a bang up job on the transformation project and most of that work you’ve been doing on your own time,” stated Zelda. “We’ve been so impressed with you.”

“Thank you,” said Gracie as she sat down with the hint of a blush all the way down her magnificent neck.

Zelda carried on, “We need someone to be in charge of our administration for the transformation project. You’ll work closely with the project director, myself and Max will continue to coach you. This will be a full time assignment and a great career move.”

Gracie leapt out of the chair. “I was hoping for a break like this. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you!” Gracie leaned down and whispered in Max’s ear, “And thank you for guiding me through that Career Map exercise.”

“Thank you Gracie,” said Zelda, as all three shared the excitement of the moment.

“Going to be awesome working with all of you. Even Max here.” She nudged him playfully. “Jungle Tech will never be the same. Number one, here we come. It’ll be fun!”

Tag walked by and heard the enthusiasm percolating in Zelda’s office. He joined in, “Everywhere the transformation gang is, there’s noise.”

“You bet,” Zelda said. “We’re a noisy fun bunch. We’ll loosen your stiff collars up when we’re done here. Right Gracie?”

“Absolutely,” said Gracie. “Wait till we have our celebration party. Plenty of jungle juice will be flowing.”

Tag roared with laughter. “Now that’s a party I’m really looking forward to. Cannot wait.” Tag turned to Max. “When you’re done. Max, can I chat for a second?”

Tag and Max said their farewells and headed off to the tiger’s office.

“Talked to Leo and he’s anxiously anticipating your one month meeting,” said Tag. “One month ago I’d have been nervous as hell about what you were going to say to the big cat. Now, I’m not.”

“You’re welcome to join us,” offered Max.

“The old Tag would have. For the new Tag, not necessary. This meeting’s an important ritual for Leo. He loves them. I’d be in the way.”

“Not at all. But the next one, you and I do together. You know Tag, you’re growing as a president in leaps and bounds. I want to tell you how impressive you’ve been with your team and staff.”

“And thank you Max for the way you got me to establish success routines. Making me think and act successfully.”

“You’ve had a success step in your walk. No more endless pacing.”

“And those creative meditation exercises you taught me. Amazing! I find I’m approaching opportunities differently. Working on some new ones right now. Big ones. I feel like I’m pulling Hal and Leanne along. But I’m really listening. Really engaging. I’ve a new found creativity.”

“The best is yet to come, my friend. Just wait till we go into planning, which is right around the corner.”

“Can’t wait Max. I can’t believe what you’ve done for us in one month. Yet, you’ve not started us planning. We’ve not been ready.”

“You are now.”

“Yeah, it all makes sense. I can hear the change in most of the executive team. So amazing! It’s as if we’re being transformed.” Tag rubbed his chin. “Hey, could you start giving all the managers at Jungle Tech Dream Coaching? They need to start transforming too.”

But there’d always be characters that never wanted to transform any core aspects of themselves. Two of these were Garth the gorilla and Samson the Siberian tiger. The two paraded as kings at the tennis club. Plenty of members around to chat with. Plenty of members to admire them, albeit for totally different reasons. Garth for the power, money and status he flaunted. Samson for his looks, charm, tennis game and the good times that came with them. Late that night, the two settled at Garth’s regular table at the club, after Garth chased away some of his flunkies, in order to have a private word with Samson.

Garth kicked it off, “You seem to be quite close to your star pupil.”

“As planned Garth.” Samson took a shot of his Russian vodka. “You just hold up your end of the deal. Keep those payments coming. She’s like putty in my paws.”

“We’ll see. It’s one thing to get a cuddle in the corner, which you are getting rewarded for. I now need you to hit a home run. Let’s see how charming you really are.”

“Now that’s a challenge worthy of a tennis pro. But I’ll want a Samson sized reward for that. How about it, big business tycoon?”

“What do you want Samson?”

“Time for the love game. I’ll getback to you on that one.” Samson smirked as he rose and headed for the tennis courts with racket in hand, and a pretty little thing waiting for his instruction and his charm.

Samson wasn't going to play all his cards right away. He didn't like Garth. He thought Garth was stupid and made little sense when he talked business. Garth tried so hard to make everyone think he was something. But Samson wasn't fooled. Samson was a player. He knew how to get what he wanted. He wouldn't let Garth know that Project Tanya was in full swing and would have the desired results. Let Garth sweat it out until Samson was certain Garth would give him what he wanted.

Samson made sure he had the upper hand, but he'd learned that it was best when no one knew you had the upper hand. There was no fence high enough to keep him from getting what he really wanted. Although he looked beautiful and was admired by all, he was a dangerous Siberian tiger.

Garth continued to sit at the table and thought that this time he would fix Leo but good. It'd be great to take Tag down with his buddy. It didn't make sense to Garth how Leo went from one success to another. Garth had brains. He knew it all. Garth thought of himself as the smartest gorilla in the jungle. He'd attended all the best schools. He knew all the right players. Even though, he never really connected with any of them beyond a surface level. He was simply too smart for them in his mind.

As far as being beneath him, Leo fit that role. That was why he wondered how Leo always lucked out with the deals. Leo possessed a limited education. No money to start with. No class at all. Yet, all those leaders that Garth should have connected with, connected with Leo. Leo didn't even hang out at the club. They talked about how wise Leo was.

Garth cringed as he remembered that even his daddy, who'd died over five years ago, used to talk highly of Leo. Garth remembered how it hurt him when his dear old dad

said to him, “Why don’t you go work for Leo? Maybe some of his common sense will rub off on you.”

Garth thought that would be the day. But he wished his luck would change. His daddy’s money was disappearing faster than he liked. His mommy rode him every week on that point.

Garth would show them all. He’d show them he was better than Leo, even those jungle beauties.

Chapter 19 – Get The Lion Up To Speed

“I see by that book in your hand, you are taking a real interest in this transformation project.” The words were neutral enough. But there was nothing unbiased about the way Leanne delivered them as she smugly strutted by Zelda the next morning. “Is the project in trouble already?”

“Leanne, the project isn’t in trouble. You know that”

“Somebody has been spreading a nasty rumor, then,” said Leanne with a knowing smirk. “Nevertheless, it must be so difficult for someone your age to keep up with all the knowledge required to survive in the jungle. If I didn’t have so much responsibility at Jungle Tech, I would have run the entire transformation project from the start. But if this project is too much for one poor old zebra to lead, I’ll be quite happy to take over and save you from drowning.”

Leanne read up on the transformation model. She thought it was fantastic. She rooted around, finding out the transformation team had already completed a ton of preliminary work. She was worried the transformation team would deliver the desired results. Therefore, she’d have to put

her political skills into high gear in order to derail the project. Or to gain all the credit for any success. She may have to work a little harder on Leo. And with Leo, she figured she knew the right strings to pull.

Rock came into work early this morning. He decided to take a break from his numbers, and read more on the transformation model. He was sure glad Leo and Tag brought in Max. He was fascinated by the subject of change and transformation. He was determined to learn all that he could. Rock wanted to be a key transformation leader at work, and make that key personal change in his life too.

Rock thought of Sophia and Camilla, but not as co-workers. Camilla was nice. But Sophia was nice in a different way. In a way that made him break into a sweat. Rock reached over for the transformation book. Except, something had been placed on top of it, and in such a manner that he wouldn't miss it.

The one month meeting between Leo and Max was underway in the lion's den that same morning. The two went through all the usual antics, which this time included sneaking in a quick 5 minute game of blitz chess. Leo kept a tactile chess set for the blind in his desk. The two loved a real quick game to get their brains stimulated before settling down to business. It was an unconventional approach. Except, it'd been extremely effective over the years.

Leo anticipated this first session with Max and inquired, "Okay, banana boy, where are we at? Tag can't stop raving about you. What happened? Did you pay them off?"

"Leo, paying off with bananas never works. Tag and I have formed a solid connection. He's growing as a leader. We'll turn Jungle Tech upside down with a major

transformation. Tag and the team are shooting for number one."

"Wow! Transform to number one. I love it."

"Of course, the transformation team and the executive team assumed we should immediately jump into forging the strategic plan to become number one. They weren't ready. There was a ton of preliminary work both groups had to complete before the process of strategic planning could commence. Most importantly, their mind set had to change."

"So typical." Leo grabbed a queen from the chess board, squeezing it tight. "Remember Jungle Air was just the same. That's where I first met Leanne. She was damn ambitious back then. Of course, she blames me for what happened. She's right, but she knew exactly what she was doing."

Max warned Leo, "I think Hal and Archie know and will try to use it against her or you."

Leo flushed with anger. "They better be careful. All right old friend. Can this executive team actually lead Jungle Tech to number one?"

"A month ago, odds were stacked against them. But based on how far they've progressed in the first month, they've a good chance. It'll take some sweat and some pain. But they can get there. There's the will to succeed from most of the key players. There's some destructive behavior. They're still dysfunctional as an executive team. Except, showing glimmers of hope in spite of some of the large egos. Not all of them will make it."

"That's all I need to hear. Over the years you've been bang on. You've always taken my companies further than I ever dreamed."

Max gave Leo that humble grin. "Yes, there were some tough ones. But one key was that you were supporting us all the way."

“Always taken your Dream Coaching seriously. You’ve also made me a lot of cash. But in the end, that’s not what it was about. The thrill was in the chase, and the wonderful animals I got to run with, in particular you.”

“My friend, you got that right. It was all about the wonderful memories and connections we made. Leo, I want to thank you. Been fantastic working with you for these years.”

“You sound like you might actually leave the jungle for good! I’d be lost!”

Leo’s assistant poked her head into the den **“**Leanne’s on the line. She says it’s very urgent. She is very insistent.”

Leo remarked, “That’s strange, Leanne never calls me. She refuses to talk about, well you know. She wants to use the fact to make me feel guilty and advance her career.”

Max stepped out of the room to give Leo privacy. The call lasted a couple of minutes with Leo directing Leanne back to Tag. Leo ended the call sounding angry, as he called Max back in. “Leanne was attempting to do an end around.” He tossed the queen piece at the wall. “That wasn’t urgent. An attempt to put Tag and Zelda in a bad light with respect to the transformation. And she was hinting she should run the entire transformation show.”

“There are always a couple of executives that love to play the escalation game,” said Max with a sigh. “And there’s a certain board member that loves to fuel the fire.”

“Oh, I know,” moaned Leo. “Driving me crazy. The way Garth tells Leanne she’s ready to be President. He and I both know Leanne has a ways to go.”

“Leo, I’m worried that these silly games could sabotage what we’re trying to do.”

“As long as Tag and I control the majority of stock, we’re okay. But Garth’s a pain. Don’t trust him. He can’t

stand me or Tag for that matter. I knew his dad, great gorilla. Since Garth's dad sadly passed away, and Garth took over, the family fortune's slowly being pissed away. Yet, Garth's trying to appear as if he's bigger than his dad in the business world. He's not even close. Too much time at the tennis club."

"It's spilling over into the executive ranks. Like poison."

"Max, keep driving this coaching in spite of any political bullshit. It's the right thing to do, no matter what. I'll fight any board battle. We'll make Jungle Tech number one. We'll fight like hell to hang on to the company: if it makes sense."

"It'll make sense Leo. Cause Jungle Tech is well positioned to make a great run. As long as the politics of the jungle don't shatter the dream."

Not only the dreams of Jungle Tech could be shattered. Personal dreams were apt to be shattered as well. Max's thoughts drifted to Sophia, Camilla, Rock, Tag, and Tanya. He knew Camilla had started to wear Sophia's favorite perfume, Opium. It wasn't good on Camilla. But she was trying. Sophia was up to something. Suspiciously quiet and slinking around in places she didn't need to be. Max thought that if Rock knew what was going on he'd be embarrassed.

Max turned his thoughts to Tag and Tanya. It was sad to know that those that had shared a great love had drifted apart. He hoped it wasn't too late.

Chapter 20 – Political Jungle

A week later down at the tennis club Tanya received quite a workout on the court. She exclaimed, “You are sure asking a lot about Jungle Tech. And you’re pushing me today. Are you trying to wear me down?”

“I like my star student to be fatigued as it’s harder to resist my charms,” suggested Samson with a gleam in his eye.

“Who’s resisting?” Tanya laughed with that wicked sexual overtone.

“Oh Tanya, you’re a naughty one. Now about those board politics.”

Tanya’s cell rang out with Tag’s special ring tone. She snatched her cell out of her tennis bag. “What do you want Tag?”

“Hi dear. I was wondering if you wanted to grab a late lunch today?”

“Tag, I’m all tied up. I can’t just drop everything because you’d some free time.”

“Sorry, I just thought a lunch at our favorite spot would be nice. Maybe we could talk and catch up.”

“Too late. As you are with most things,” snapped Tanya, and ended the call. She turned to Samson and winked. “Got plans for lunch handsome? I’m so very hungry.”

Back at Jungle Tech headquarters, Harvey the hippo caught Max refreshing his bottle at the water cooler. Harvey worked for Archie in Operations. He represented that area on the transformation project. The word was he was a slow moving hippo, but outstanding at his job. A real bright light in the Operations area, who’d become a key player in the transformation of Jungle Tech.

“Oh Max, can I chat for a few minutes?”

“What’s on your mind Harvey?”

“I’ve been watching you. You’re slim. You’re fit. I watch you take your walks. I heard you were into the martial arts and golf. How does a blind monkey do that stuff?”

“With the help of some very special and patient individuals,” replied Max.

“Wow, that’s neat,” said Harvey. “Wish I could do one of those sports. I know I refused your Dream Coaching offer for everyone on the transformation team.”

“I’m sure you’d a good reason. But why Harvey?”

The hippo looked down. “Well, my boss Archie ordered me to stay away from you. Or he’d fire me. But everyone raves about you and the DREAM model. And you’re coaching all the managers now, except me. I want to transform myself. Like we’re doing with Jungle Tech.”

We can start coaching anytime you want.

“Great! I know one of the areas I want to start on. I don’t take care of myself. My weight affects my energy level.”

“How determined are you Harvey?”

“Extremely! I’ll do anything to get the zip back. I’ll never be slim, but I can be slimmer than I am.”

“Well, you could go to a fitness place. I can recommend one.”

“Max, just get me started and then I’ll sign up.”

“Can start your coaching sessions on our walks. But I’m no expert in fitness.”

“But there’s something about you Max, determination.”

“Let’s start out at lunch with a walking and coaching session.”

Harvey patted Max on the back. “You’re on! Once you get me off to a good start, I promise I’ll join a fitness club, one with a pool, I love to swim. But with the Dream Coaching I’ll keep going.”

“Exciting!”

“And maybe you could teach me about how politics works in the corporate jungle. I’m not very good at that stuff. I’m a nuts and

bolts kind of hippo. It seems like there's an abundance of political games around here."

Meanwhile, over in the executive wing, Zelda, Rock, and Paula were finishing up on the resourcing plan for the transformation project. Hal poked his smiling face into the room. "There's a lot of laughing going on in here. Do you transformers ever do any work?"

"Absolutely." Zelda pointed a hoof at Hal. "We just put the finishing touches on the resources for the transformation project. We're ready to go. Except for your Sales area. You need to commit."

"No kidding Hal," said Paula. "Better have enough resources from your area. Or Sales will get changed without enough of your input."

Rock jumped in, "It's time to really get on board."

Hal asked, "You transformers aren't actually serious about this transformation?"

"Extremely serious," replied Rock, "and all the executives have to be on the same page. No more political maneuvering!"

"Time to step up and be counted," said Zelda, "and you know who I want from your area."

Hal felt uncomfortable. For he was on the spot. He hated that. He kept smiling, "I'll look at it and get back to you."

"Oh Hal." Rock stood up. "let me walk you back to your office. We can chat about the resources we need. And I've some questions on your exorbitant expense claims."

Early the next morning Max received a call from Leo who said with excitement leaping out of the phone, "Hold on to your hat. I'm going after JTel. Just me. Privately owned and only one partner. The fewer the partners, the less political crap I've gotta put up with."

"Wow! That's big. JTel is as big as Jungle Tech. Who's your partner?"

“Triple Anonymous. Now there is confidentiality. I only deal with their lawyers. Their lawyer reveals nothing about who’s behind it. They’ve been great silent partners so far. The deal stretches me on the cash side, so Triple Anonymous gets me over the top.”

“Are you sure you want the head aches? Why don’t you slow down?”

“No way Max. Love this stuff.”

“You’ll never change. So what have you found out in regard to JTel?”

“They’re in financial trouble. The current president is suspect, so I hear. Max, if this thing gets closer, would you meet with this president for JTel. I don’t trust hear say. I trust what Max says.”

“You got it Leo.”

“Wait Max! Need to ask one last favor. My dear wife has sent me three texts already. Reminding me to make sure I ask you. Our son, Lester the lion cub is on a break from Jungle University. He’s studying coaching at school. He’s all theory. He needs some real experience. He hasn’t seen how destructive politics can destroy sound theory. Could you let him hang around while you do your magic? He’s eager and a hard worker. He’s a likable cub. But he thinks that his dad is old fashioned.”

“It’d be my pleasure to have Lester work with me. He might teach me a few things. Maybe a lot of things.”

“Thanks Max, I’ll give him your number and his real education can begin.”

They ended the call. Leo reflected on how tough it must be for Max. The odds were so stacked against him. Leo wished there was more understanding in the jungle of how difficult it is for animals and birds with real disabilities. Leo would do anything to give Max his sight back. Max just never gave up. He was actually a real inspiration to Leo. More than Max would ever know.

Leo leaned back and groaned. He thought they would both require true determination to get through this transformation, as this

transformation didn't have the standard jungle politics. It felt more like a growing full scale jungle mutiny.

Chapter 21 - Mutiny In The Jungle

Garth surprised Zelda on her cell that afternoon as she rushed to a client meeting. "Hi, Zelda darling. It's big Garth the gorilla. Main board guy for Jungle Tech and owner of Gorilla Net. But you know that. I have a proposition for you. Meet me at the club in ten minutes."

"What about?" Zelda asked.

"Just meet me. When a gorilla of my stature says meet me. You don't ask."

"Sorry Garth, I can't meet you for at least a couple of hours. I've an important customer meeting. I'm on my way to as we speak. But I can race over to the club right after."

"Blow them off," snapped Garth. "I'm much more important than some bloody customer."

"Oh, you're important. Except, I could never do that. I can meet you right after or any other time. Sorry," said Zelda with a slight quiver in her voice.

"Fine then, gallop straight over when you're done," Garth growled and ended the call. Garth thought he'd have to put this zebra in her place. That wouldn't take him long.

Zelda arrived at the club two hours later. She was escorted to Garth's back room table where he held court with a few of his cronies. Garth cleared them out with a wave of his hand.

"Here's the deal Zelda. I want you to come and work for Gorilla Net. It'll be good for your career. I'll pay you more. You'll get a membership in the club. You can start tomorrow."

“What would I do?”

“Have an important role, VP of something or other? Work out the details with my President. That crazy transformation thing you’re working on is a waste of time. Things are going to change around Jungle Tech in short order anyway. Wait and see.”

“I really want to make the transformation project work. I’ve given my word.”

“Your word. That means nothing. You’ll be dancing to a different tune in a matter of weeks, maybe days. I’ll be calling the shots soon. Just do it Zelda.”

“Thank you Garth. I’m flattered. But I just can’t step away. I can make a difference.”

“Do you understand who you are talking to? I could ruin you.”

“You probably could. But I have to live with myself. Sorry, Garth, this is no reflection on you. I gave my word to my team. If you want to have me fired, that’s your choice. But the transformation of Jungle Tech is important to me. Thank you very much for the offer.”

“Get out of here. I don’t want to have anything to do with you.” Garth boiled in side with rage.

Ever since he was a little gorilla, he hated not getting what he wanted. He wanted Zelda out of Jungle Tech. He wanted all of Jungle Tech. Also, Garth heard through the grapevine that Leo was sniffing around for another big acquisition. He wanted to know who. Luck seemed to follow Leo around thought Garth. Leo seemed to find these troubled companies and then turn them around. This time Garth would find out and steal the deal from under Leo’s nose. Even if he couldn’t steal the deal, it’d stretch Leo financially. That’d leave Leo’s Jungle Tech holdings exposed. Garth smiled and ordered another drink. This was going to be his time to put on a jungle show.

Except, the next day at Jungle Tech head office, a real first class show kicked off. The official launch of the transformation

project. Zelda and Max selected that launch of the project a few days prior to the commencement of the Jungle Tech strategic planning process. The preliminary efforts of Zelda and the transformation team were creating a positive buzz. Things were happening. Things were going to change.

Leo and Tag kicked off the official launch with all the splendor the event deserved. Zelda was marvelous. The energy was infectious. In large part, thanks to Zelda, Gracie and Paula. Paula made Max proud. Her confidence was such a pleasant sound to hear. If the executive team could show half as much enthusiasm as the transformation team toward the whole transformation initiative this would be a slam dunk. Except, there were some individual agendas being pursued by the executive team members that were anything but honorable.

After the kickoff session, Archie the ape hunted for allies. He wanted this transformation train stopped. Leanne and Hal were his most promising allies. The three convened another highly secretive meeting. Leanne encouraged Archie to take a firm stand. He should escalate the matter over Tag's head the way Leanne had done. Leanne and Hal alluded to the fact that they may try an even more aggressive path. But it'd depend on how the other big guy was faring, and which way the wind of opportunity blew.

Therefore they pushed Archie to take a firm stand. Promised support when the time was right. They'd work the back rooms for him in this stage of their mutiny.

The next day Archie drummed up the nerve; he called up Garth the Gorilla. A quiet drink at the club was arranged that evening.

"Hi sir," said Archie, as they shook hands, "Thank you for seeing me on such short notice. I-I-I'll be quick."

"You better make it quick. My time is valuable." Garth loved it when someone trembled in his presence. The power was sweet, he thought. If Daddy could see me now.

“I-I will, sir.” Archie cleared his throat. “I wanna tell you about a terrible thing that’s goin on in Jungle Tech. Seeing how you and I are almost like brothers. We probably see things the same.”

“We’re far from brothers, you overgrown monkey. Don’t insult me. Now go on.”

“So-so so sorry, sir,” Archie said as he continued to shrink into his chair. “I-I just wanna say that Jungle Tech’s starting to make changes. Well, I think it’s all wrong. This blind monkey is getten everyone way too excited. I don’t like it. Tag’s starting to lead differently. We gotta stop ‘em. They’re gonna change everything. I got lots of support. Time to shut them down, throw out that monkey, and go back to the way things were.”

Archie started pounding his chest. Garth put out his hands to quiet the ape. “Arch, stop making a scene. You’ve come to the right place. Tell me more.”

Archie bumbled on, “Ah, well, they don’t know what they’re doing. They wanna be number one. Big deal. We were okay where we were. They wanna move too fast. Tag’s like a tiger on the hunt. Hate when he gets that look in his eye.”

“Interesting. Valuable info. Keep me in touch as to what is going on. Don’t sabotage yet. However, when I say sabotage, you and your allies should be ready to sink this whole project. Got it Arch? Although, just to show your loyalty to me, I want a gesture. Nothing too damaging. Show me that you are my pawn. Well, one of my many pawns.”

Archie nodded repeatedly. “You bet, Garth. Anything you say. I’ll just go along till you give me the word.”

“Good. Now back to work. Keep me informed.”

They shook hands and Archie shuffled off. Garth sat back and smiled. He thought how he didn’t get Zelda in his pocket, but he did get Archie. Not quite as good. He’d have to move a little faster then planned. But that was okay. Let Tag, Zelda and that monkey lay the foundation for his future success. Let them go ahead with the

transformation. If it failed, he'd string them up. If they found success, he'd take all the credit for the transformation when he took Jungle Tech. He was going to be king of the jungle.

Garth picked up his cell and started texting. He smiled and anticipated how he would kick out Leo, fire Tag, dump Zelda, and a couple of those other executives including Archie, his newest pawn. Might have to meet that blind monkey and put some fear in him. He'd never met a monkey he could not scare silly.

This jungle mutiny was definitely getting hot and rough.

Chapter 22 - Jungle Planning

"Planning's for wimps," yelled Archie the day after his meeting with Garth. The ape pounded his chest in front of Leanne and Hal. "I never plan. If I gotta problem I eliminate it or ignore it."

Leanne, Hal and Archie held a private meeting at the tennis club. They discussed the transformation project, and its potential impacts to themselves.

"That old presentation On Jungle Tech's vision that Tag built is such a joke," Leanne stated. "I could have built a presentation twice as long as Tag's."

"Sure is a joke," agreed Hal. "I don't know why we need strategies in Sales or Jungle Tech for that matter. What's a strategy anyway?"

Archie guzzled his beer, burped, wiping his mouth with his sleeve. "Don't need no damn plan. Look at our tennis pal Garth. Says he never plans and he's got lots of money."

"Garth's right," Hal exclaimed. "It's amazing how inheriting his daddy's money sure's made Garth an expert on business."

That night back at Jungle Tech headquarters Tag admitted, “In the past, I really missed the boat on the planning front. I’m the only one that connected with the vision, which I’d painfully laid out on this never ending slide deck. Time to start over.”

It was time to start from scratch. Max facilitated the Jungle Tech executive team through a series of three grueling planning sessions using the DREAM model to guide the group. He used a variety of tried and true facilitation techniques. Even blindfolds were worn at a critical point in one session.

Max blindfolded every second executive. He hooked them up in pairs. The paired executives focused on key strategic goals while they embarked on a working walk. The two executives navigated a route while developing creative approaches to their particular goals.

The connections between partners were invaluable as they made their way. The good news was no one was hurt through this guiding exercise. The great news was the quality of results produced in this unconventional setting was outstanding. Creativity was alive and flourishing in Jungle Tech.

As Tag commented after his strategic walk where he was blind folded, “I’m seeing things so much more clearly when I can’t actually see. I also feel much closer to the individual guiding me. I had to trust them. Feels great!”

Archie the ape was the one executive who couldn’t break the strategic or creative barrier. Continually, he fell back into the past. He remained in the operational trap. It became obvious that he couldn’t move on, or didn’t want to move on. If he had something to say, it was a complaint in relation to an obscure issue. When he was pressed on that issue, his comments were general in nature, only referring to

the amount of change. At one point in a session he blurted out, “Let’s forget this being number one stuff. Let’s just stay the way we are, and I ain’t gonna complain any more.”

Leanne and Hal provided a bit of meaningful contribution. There was still large chunks of reservation. At times they were faking their enthusiasm and commitment. The two would start a new session by resisting and disengaging. As the session progressed the two would show signs of engagement. Overall, the two were making some progress, even with their self centered agendas.

At a couple of breaks, animated conversations took place among Leanne, Hal and Archie. Archie did the majority of the fist shaking, chest thumping and talking. His tone indicated major upset. Max figured he was having difficulty turning the other two towards his course of action, for now.

A major glitch occurred in the second planning session when Zelda received an urgent call. She ran from the room. She proceeded to call Tag out after ten minutes. When Zelda returned she appeared shaken.

Zelda admitted, “A major issue with our second largest customer has occurred. Their order was royally screwed up. I’ve talked to the customer and, Tag’s on the phone doing damage control. They were upset to say the least.”

Archie knew they were to have their tech toys put away for the session. But he sent off a message anyway. “Bulls eye!”

“Anything we can do to help?” Rock asked.

“Thanks, but under control for now,” replied Zelda.

Paula inquired, “What happened Zelda?”

“Right now we’re frantically trying to fix the problem and support the customer. We’ll have a full root cause analysis performed when we settle things down. It is a mystery. Like the large order and most of its associated

electronic documents vanished into thin air. Thank goodness we have backups."

Rock rubbed his chin. "That's strange. Could be a system problem or animal error or who knows."

"Possibly sabotage," added Camilla.

"Anything's possible," Zelda said with a sigh.

Archie thumped his chest once. "No way. It's all this damn talk of change. Probably got the stupid animals all worked up so they're making dumb mistakes. Instead of being in here, we should be out there fixing the mess this fancy strategy and change talk created."

Tag came back in the room. "Fixed! We have it worked out. Zelda, you and your team were amazing. The customer is so impressed with how fast you responded. Funny how it goes. Now that the issue is fixed, the customer's more satisfied with us. Of course, they're not happy it occurred. But happy with us and how we responded."

"We'll get to the bottom of it," Zelda said with a firm tone.

Archie waved his hand in the air. "Why bother. it's over. Done is done."

Tag snarled, "You bet we will get to the bottom of this. This was one of the biggest errors we've ever made."

Max called for a fifteen minute break so they all could collect their thoughts. Tag took the opportunity to put it all in perspective. "Team, this incident enforces why we need to transform Jungle Tech. If we are going to be number one, we'll have to change. Maybe this was fate telling us it's time for big changes. When we come back I want us to be more determined to build a dream and goals that'll take us to the top!"

Max happened to be close to Archie, hearing his uncomfortable shuffling and not so subtle scratching over the

past couple of minutes. Also, Max heard Archie gulp at Tag's last words.

When the team reconvened, most were invigorated. That may have been one of the key turning points for the group. It brought a part of the group closer together. The remainder of that particular session turned out some of the teams more brilliant work.

It took a week to complete the planning sessions. At the end of the final session, Archie fired a message with an emoji of a rotting banana to Hal and Leanne. "No one support. Plan will die on vine."

Leanne replied with a message, "Great dream and goals. But Tag never executes."

Chapter 23 - Acting On The Dream

Max's cell rang out two days later. Leo roared, "Max, you're making a top notch president out of Tag. You were the one that started Tag and his team thinking creatively. They can't stop raving about their new dream and goals to be number one. One of those goals was to make an acquisition. And Tag and I just cut a deal with a Tech company. Jungle Tech's going to acquire 100% of IVine."

"That's great Leo!"

"It's one-fourth the size of Jungle Tech," said Leo. "Compliments Jungle Tech real nice. Getting it cheap. Tag. Rock and Camilla worked all night. We're ready to go to an emergency board meeting tonight."

What Leo and Max didn't know was how hard it was for Rock to work with Camilla last night. Rock had found a copy

of an old article on his desk from a British newspaper. He didn't know how it got there. But that didn't matter now. He couldn't believe what he read. Shocked and saddened, he was even angry. He kept thinking about finding his own family and couldn't comprehend, any animal, especially a cougar, ever doing something like that. He was a professional and would have to work with her, but nothing else.

"How'd you think Garth will react to this purchase?" Max asked.

"Who cares? Tag and I talked to Tanya. She's fine. What can he do? He'll rant a lot. We'll let him spout off to a point. He tries to ask the tough business questions. But we've got the answers. Garth's so far out of his league, damn comical."

"You guys are fast. Love it. Tell me about IVine."

"Tag came to me with the idea resulting from the planning sessions. We both made a few calls. Tag was right, they were in trouble. We gave them a way out. IVine brings a ton of customers in a sector that we haven't had much success in. They gotta service offering that fits real well."

"When would it unfold Leo?"

"Real quick Max. What'd you think? While we're transforming Jungle Tech, role in the integration of IVine into the project. It'll be a breeze."

"Performing a transformation of one company and then throwing in an integration of another. That adds a lot of scope and complexity to the transformation project."

"Nothing to it, Max."

"It's a challenge. But I'll bet Zelda and her team will do it."

"By the way, thanks for taking Lester under your wing. He thinks you're the greatest. Didn't have the heart to tell him what you were really about. Thanks again buddy."

"My pleasure, Leo."

“Oh and Tag and I were wondering if you could provide Dream Coaching for each of the Ivine staff coming over?”

The emergency board meeting rated as a challenge. But in the end the acquisition of IVine was approved. Garth raged, thumping his chest. Leo and Tag knew they carried the weight to push the deal through for IVine as they had Tanya on their side. She didn’t appear all that thrilled. But she voted Leo and Tag’s way.

Garth couldn’t catch them on any technicalities to stop the deal. Tag, Rock and Camilla came across extremely well. Everything was covered off. A great deal, Garth thought. Why didn’t he luck out and get ones like that? That Leo was just lucky when it came to business. Garth promised himself, this would be the last time he’d be bested by Leo and Tag. He’d stop at nothing to finally be revered as the real king of the jungle.

Following the emergency board meeting Tanya fired a message to Sophia with an emoji of an iceberg attached. “Your strategy worked! Rock cold with cougar.”

Chapter 24 - Structure In The Jungle

Camilla took up distance running as one of her SMART goals. Her heart monitor informed her she needed to slow down. She reflected how things were changing. In her old world her body structure was only built for one type of race. And that young reptile would have never got to the starting line. Except, in this new world, how was an older cougar to keep up with that youth? And why had Rock become so cold?

One week after the final planning session, Tag blurted out, “Max, I can’t believe how many times I have been asked by various executives, how the new dream goals and action plan will affect their role.”

“Very standard,” said Max, “they are rightfully concerned with all the changes. They feel that they have something to lose or gain. You’re at the stage where you can begin building the answers.”

It was time for Tag and Max to delve into the details on the organization structure. Most of the team was committed to the dream and goals. Except for Archie, who wouldn’t commit at any level. He criticized everything, using little logic or facts to back it up. Everyone tried to listen and understand him. He refused to change.

As far as Hal and Leanne, they were masters of the jungle game. They supported the new dream within Jungle Tech. Their resistance would come in another form. They weren’t opposed to the dream and goals, per se. They were focused on who would receive the credit, power, and the most benefit from the new Jungle Tech. Therefore, Leanne and Hal’s type of resistance wouldn’t be obvious. Max referred to it as opportunistic resistance.

As for opportunistic, Garth called up Sophia who was caught in her own dilemma. “Darling! How’s the most perfectly structured assistant in the jungle doing today? You and I need to secretly meet and ensure all critical info coming out of Tag’s office is passed on to me. Can’t have another IVine!”

“Ah, okay Garth.”

“Sophia, how about the Shady Lane Motel this evening?”

“Well, ah, umm, but I have to work late tonight.” Sophia trembled and could only think to stall Garth, and then he’ll move on to someone else. For she’d heard plenty of unsavory stories from her reptile friends about this gorilla’s dealings with females. “Garth, maybe I’ll pick up some juicy info on the new structure.”

“It better be good,” Garth said in his gruff tone. “I hate being disappointed.”

Hal heard from Sophia that Tag and Max were going to talk structure. So, Hal left a voice message with Max. “My new title should be - Senior Executive VP. Means I must get a fancier company car to match my new title. Maybe I now deserve a second hot assistant.”

When Leanne heard from Hal about the structure meeting, she marched into Max’s workspace and spoke with a quiver, “I am devastated. I learned that Zelda’s office is 2.5 square feet larger than mine. And if Hal gets a second assistant. Then I must get a second hot male assistant. We must get these items fixed with the structure changes. If my sister ever found out. So humiliating! And what will the IVine animals think?”

Max said, “It sounds like a little sibling rivalry. What’s the connection to IVine?”

“I have to be, I mean I should be the new President of IVine. They should be run as a separate entity totally isolated from Jungle Tech. And if I were a president. I’d finally be somebody.”

Everyone except Leanne knew the two groups needed to come together. Bring them together quickly, but understand you’re dealing with individual’s lives and feelings. This is

where Paula's new found assertiveness paid off. She ensured the integration was conducted in a most respectful manner.

Tag and Max met with the remaining executives in IVine. They were an inexperienced group. The President and two VP's left upon the sale as that was part of the deal. The remaining IVine executives wanted to stay with Jungle Tech. They realized they were junior to many of the Jungle Tech leaders, except for Percy the peacock.

Percy was a classic technical brain. Except, he'd an excellent leadership style. Not your ordinary proud peacock, he'd a great personality. Percy stood as the brains behind many of IVine's service offerings. He'd the energy and leadership to lead technical employees. And he now ranked up there with Rock for being the hottest male on the exec team.

The next day Tag presented the new structure to the executive team without names, only roles. Tag gathered input, listened hard and adjustments were made. The structure session ended. Archie complained to Leanne, "There's no way I can be a part of something that puts the customer on top. And I don't support the stupid animals and birds that work for me. I fight with them."

Obviously, Archie didn't fit in. Nor did he want to fit in. Within one day, he was let go from Jungle Tech. He agreed he couldn't buy in to the future. Archie was treated more than fairly. But he did part company carrying major resentment. He warned them that Garth the gorilla wouldn't like this. Also, he smashed a couple pieces of art work in the reception area as he left the Jungle Tech building.

Harvey the hippo ranked as the best choice to lead a transformed Operations area. Growth Marketing, Finance, Animal Resources, and Legal experienced minor

responsibility adjustments. The area of Customer Success, which Zelda led was eliminated.

Some of the responsibilities from Customer Success went to a much more customer focused Operations led by Harvey, and some went to two geographically split Sales and Solutions areas. Hal led the East, and Zelda led the West.

Hal bragged to a former Jungle Tech executive, “Archie, I wanted it this way. I didn’t want all that travel. My current, very hot clients would miss me down at the club.”

Edward the elephant enjoyed many Dream Coaching sessions. It was an early session when Max took him through the exercise called: What makes my heart sing, where he realized his true dream. He determined he preferred to remain at Jungle Tech. Except, not in a traditional leadership role. Edward wanted to use his technical brain to its utmost capacity. Tag and Edward worked out a unique arrangement where the elephant could fulfill that role. But didn’t require Edward to carry any traditional leadership responsibilities.

As Edward said to Max, “I feel like a weight has lifted from my shoulders. I despised being in an executive leadership role. But I did it for the money and status. I like the way Tag has still given me some of that status I desire. However in a manner, I am much more comfortable with. I love the future of Jungle Tech. I know I can contribute more than ever to its success. This is going to be exciting!”

Max praised him, “Edward, it takes a big elephant to do what you are doing.”

“You know Max. Deep down, I knew I was not cut out to be the high flying executive. I feel more relaxed than I have been in years. I chased the executive job for the wrong reasons. Between the exotic trips, big house, fancy cars, and the polo club we were consumer extraordinaire. I am way

over my head. I had to earn this executive money simply to make ends meet."

"Edward, that's a lot of pressure?"

"You bet. It's like a visual trap; instead it's a financial trap. After our last coaching session, where we built a new goal and actions for my financial situation. I feel great."

"How'd your wife respond?"

"Famously! Wants to make a clean sweep. My wife and I have gone to see a financial counsellor to help straighten us out. It was definitely time."

Percy the peacock became the VP Technology. He assumed the executive responsibilities of Edward. The two really hit it off. Edward possessed the technical brilliance over Percy. Although, Percy possessed outstanding leadership skills. Percy was bright enough to play in Edward's league as far as current and future technology. The two made a great team.

Percy slid into the executive role seamlessly. The Jungle Tech executive didn't miss a beat with the changes. Also, with Percy joining the team, IVine had at least one of their own at the executive table. And Paula had another bird at that Jungle Tech executive table.

New Jungle Tech Executive Team:

- Camilla the cougar, VP Legal
- Edward the elephant, Special Technology Advisor
- Hal the hyena, VP Sales & Solutions East
- Harvey the hippo, VP Operations
- Leanne the leopard, VP Growth Marketing
- Paula the parrot, VP Animal Resources
- Percy the peacock, VP Technology
- Rock the rhino, VP Finance

- Zelda the zebra, VP Sales & Solutions West

Leanne cornered Percy after his new appointment, attempting to ruffle his pretty feathers. She pronounced, “Clearly you come from an inferior company. You’ll have to be taught how things are done at Jungle Tech. You follow my lead like a good peacock should. I’ll tell you what to do. After all, peacocks are merely for show, they’re certainly not known for their brains.”

After the numerous structure issues were addressed, Tag could feel that they were setting up the organization that could take them to number one. On one of their legendary walks, he said to Max, “I love the new structure and what it’s doing for our overall approach. Even Leanne and Hal sort of think we’re doing the right things. Although they hate my guts. They’d rather run this thing.”

The first animal Archie called upon his departure from Jungle Tech was Garth. “Hi Garth, it’s Archie here.”

“Go ahead, I’m a busy gorilla,” growled Garth.

“I don’t know if you heard but I was let go from Jungle Tech yesterday. I’ve been screwed. I’m the best thing they ever had.”

Garth interjected, “Too bad. That’s terrible. I’d never have let that happen. If I’d have known.” Actually Leo had let Garth in on this decision. It was one of the few things they had agreed on in years.

“Can you do anything for me?” Archie asked.

“Unfortunately, it is too late. If I would have known earlier, but oh well. I’ve got some little jobs that can keep you busy. There’ll be changes happening. I may need an ape like yourself. You in?”

“Absolutely boss! Anything to settle the score with those cats.”

“I want to hear how my other pawns, I mean friends, Leanne and Hal are faring? Then tell me about that nuisance of a monkey.”

Immediately upon ending his call with Archie, Garth called Tag. “Garth here. I want this transformation project put on hold until I give the word on the correct path forward. I heard all about the major customer issues due to those changes sparked by that monkey.”

“The transformation project’s making incredible progress. Have you talked to Leo about this?”

“I give the orders Tag. Shut the thing down!”

“Garth, how about I get Leo on the line and we have a three way chat? Oh, one other thing. That major customer issue is pointing to sabotage. We’ve our security and legal area looking into it.”

There was a major pause from Garth. “It is that transformation garbage. Just shut it down! Get that monkey out of there.”

“Leo’s cell is ringing,” said Tag.

Garth hung up just as Leo answered, “Leo here.”

“Never mind Leo, Garth tried to shut the transformation project down on the grounds of our customer disaster. He bailed when you came on the line.”

“Such a jerk,” said Leo.

“He’s all blown out, for now. Leo, I think he’s a little scared of you.”

“Not scared enough. He’s trouble Tag. If he gets his way, he’ll rip the very structure of Jungle Tech apart, just to get at you and me.”

Chapter 25 - Is There Process In This Jungle

Tanya and Garth enjoyed their fifth cocktail down at the club one week later. With each drink Tanya became more and more entangled in Garth's trap. Garth said, "You must be furious the way those two cats tricked us on that IVine deal?"

Tanya remembered that she felt ticked how they pushed her to vote their way. But she felt proud of how Tag handled himself in the meeting. Maybe he was changing she thought.

Garth carried on, "Last time that'll happen. You and I need to share more private info we get from those close to us if you know what I mean. It's our secret. Samson thinks us sharing so called confidential info is a great idea. Also, he'd be willing to give you, I mean us, very private business coaching tips on what to do with this info. That's swell of him."

Tanya perked up as she thought of having more time with sexy Samson and his sculpted physique. She slurred, "Maybe we should."She figured Tag wouldn't like that. Except, it was another chance to be even closer to smoking hot Samson. She thought of how information is power. Could this make her the center of attention again? Could this make her the queen of the jungle, like the old days back in Asia?

Garth smiled and thought how the process of destroying Leo and Tag was going to be too easy. He ordered another round.

Over at Jungle Tech, Zelda rubbed her temples. Why can't everyone put their egos aside and do what's right for Jungle Tech? Hal avoids process discussions like it was the plague.

Max said, “As in every transformation there are a variety of egos and a wide variety of agendas to deal with. We need to understand Hal’s agenda. It may not be as obvious as we think. And his ego may be larger then we think.”

Max met with that ego next day, which could never be checked at any door. Hal the hyena said, “I like what you’ve done for Tag. Making my job easier. He’s pulling in some big deals. Been able to feast on his kills. I get a big slice of the kills as the exec in charge of Sales and Solutions East.”

“You don’t feel any guilt?” Max asked.

“Guilt’s for losers. All about the cash.”

“Hal, one thing that fascinates me is that you haven’t wanted to touch the sales commission plan as part of the transformation project. As well, the processes you’re looking at in the sales area are barely scratching the surface. I think they could use an overhaul. I know Zelda with her new responsibilities with Sales and Solutions West wants major changes.”

“Zelda knows nothing. I thought I was participating enough to get the transformation bonus. As for the current commission plan I love it.” Hal laughed. “My sales animals get their small cut. Their boss gets the biggest piece of the action. As long as I get more than them, I’m smiling.”

“Let’s ignore the transformation bonus for the executives for a second. Let’s talk sales and improving results. Here’s my concern, your turnover of sales staff is inordinately high for this industry. You bring them in young. They receive no training. The good ones are off to your competitors once they get a year of experience. I understand why the turnover would be at a certain level. But this is unbelievable!”

“No big deal, I can always get new sales animals. And I never hire sales birds.”

“Let me put it in terms you can relate too. Do you realize how much cash you’re leaving on the table? Never mind the revenue they could be generating for Jungle Tech.”

“What’d you mean?” Hal asked as he straightened up in his chair.

“Your cut is a little high for a sales executive. I would trim it down and make it up by giving you a larger corporate bonus plan. Then I would up the commission plan for your sales animals and birds when you finally see their value. The commission isn’t even close to industry standards. No wonder they leave. The other reason your sales staff are departing in such large numbers is the lack of effective processes in the sales area to complete the typical deal. That comes from every exit interview in Sales this year.”

“Didn’t think anyone read those exit interviews.”

“It’s all there. It’s gold in yours, and Jungle Tech’s pocket. If you want it.”

Hal started to make a flippant remark. He stopped, thought, and spoke, “Are you serious? If we change the sales commission plan and redesign some key processes, it’d be like putting money in my pocket?”

“Yes.” Max rolled his eyes. For he’d been over this with Hal several times before.

“Max, why didn’t you tell me?”

Max had been at Jungle Tech for three months. He received a call from Rock. “Wow! We already have some savings from the process re-design work.”

Zelda called Max minutes later and exclaimed, “Its like a speeding locomotive. But it’s staying right on track!”

One area that was outstanding in re-designing itself was Operations, being led by Harvey. In the Design Your Dream phase, Max guided the hippo through a creative exercise called the Crystal Ball. Harvey zeroed in on his dream of making Operations a big part of becoming number one, and his dream of being in tip top shape. The Reality Scan phase drew out little obstacles to the dream, except, for his willpower and determination challenge.

Next, his energizing goals were built. Max used the Backward Planning exercise in the Action Stepping Stones phase of the DREAM model. Starting at the end point, they worked backward. Finally, in the Motivation Beyond Achievement phase, Max encouraged Harvey to follow a process of reviewing his goals and actions every morning and evening, resulting in one determined hippo.

As progress unfolded on the goals, Harvey relayed redesign plans to Max on their walks. Harvey even shared with Max that on the day of his appointment to the VP Operations job, Leanne called him at home to say that he really reported to her, and that Harvey must clear everything through her. Which he never did?

Overall, the process re-design train had left the station and traveled a substantial distance already. They'd a ways to go. But Max was much more confident that in the end, all the process design projects would deliver outstanding results. But who would continue to attempt to derail that train?

Heading out on a walk a voice cried out, "Max, may I join you?"

"Absolutely Leanne."

Leanne caught up and asked, "You like to take short walks?"

Max replied, “Clears the head, and many times I generate creative ideas.”

“Max, I have a couple of questions for you.”

“Fire away. Do you mind if I hook on? We can go at a faster clip that way?”

Leanne paused and said, “I’ve never. Well, guided anyone blind before. Not sure what to do.”

“Nothing to it,” assured Max. He gave her a brief description. “Would you be able to sue me if you got hurt?”

“Not at all Leanne. Let’s just enjoy our walk.” Max took Leanne’s shoulder and away they went.

“Max is this transformation thing really going to work? I wasn’t convinced three months ago when you showed up, so I played along. I wasn’t sure what was in it for me.”

“It’ll work. Unless the politics sink it.”

“What do you mean?”

“Come on Leanne, you’re well aware of the political games unfolding.”

“I’m aware Max. But if we are successful who deserves the credit?”

“Little early to worry about credit,” scolded Max. “But if you must, many of you deserve credit! No one should be singled out in this one.”

“I think I deserve the credit. Does Tag deserve any?”

“So far Tag’s been a real key. As has Zelda, Paula, Harvey, and Rock. As have you in leading aspects of the Sales and Growth Marketing turn around.”

“I did a fantastic job. The best job. Love the new approach and processes in Growth Marketing. I cannot believe how bad our processes were in that Sales area. The way you zoomed in on our ineffective Sales Compensation plan was amazing. Well, I got it fixed.”

“Yes, Leanne, you were the leader of the sub team. You had an outstanding team behind you, including Gail the gazelle.”

“Oh please Max, Gail’s simply a skittish gazelle. The sub team is all about me, and getting the credit.”

“Many animals and birds deserve a lot of credit. If the success continues, I’m sure there’ll be some infighting to see who gets more credit in front of the board. Is that what you’re fishing for?”

Leanne stumbled over her words, “Ah, well maybe. If we’re going to be successful, I thought Tag would get too much credit, and well you know. I deserve the majority.” In her mind, she deserved it all. And if she couldn’t get it all. Then well, no one should she figured.

“There’s credit for all. Little early to worry about credit. Except, there’s plenty to go around when we are successfully running at number one for an extended period. You all can look good in front of the board. The board should operate the same way. Nonetheless, the same issue will occur on the board. Who will want to take credit? Who will roar the loudest? Who will be in front of the cameras for the Channel 4 Jungle Business News when it’s time to brag?”

Leanne sighed. “Well, I guess we know who should get credit on the board. Who will take it? That’s another issue.”

“How about we let that political stuff take care of itself? Let’s do what is right for Jungle Tech. Let’s focus on results rather than credit.”

Leanne blurted out, “But I want to be on the winning team. I want to be seen as a star. I want all the credit. I like the cameras.”

They finished their walk and went their separate ways. Max knew Leanne would play a key role going forward. Hopefully, it’d be a positive one.

Leanne sprinted straight back to her office. She called him and said, “Time to talk.”

“Maybe we’ll do more than talk,” replied the gruff voice.

Max proceeded back to his work space pondering the politics that surrounded every organization, There was no denying it. It was tiring, between the politics, and the incredible long hours. He wondered, is this the last one? His wife Mindy asked him that very question last night. He’d think about that another time. Jungle Tech took some real positive steps. But had a long road ahead of it, before success was attained, before Max could depart, and before they could pop the champagne.

Yes, this jungle was getting ahead of itself.

Chapter 26 - Are the Animals Performing

“I’m going to be away for a couple of days,” Tag stated the next morning. “I’ll announce you as the TIC (Temporary in Charge) during my absence.”

Zelda raised her eyebrows in surprise. “Thank you for the vote of confidence. I’ll make sure things are in one piece when you get back.”

“Not like the last time. When I left, ‘you know who’ as the TIC. What a performance!”

Hal the hyena leaned back in his chair and stretched that same morning. “Well, Jack the jackal, I need a favor from my star animal.”

“You name it,” said Jack with a nod, “anything you need boss.”

Jack was one of Hal’s sales’ animals. Hal ranked Jack at the top of any bell curve when the performance ratings were being handed out. Not that Jack delivered good results. But Jack was Hal’s boy. He did whatever Hal wanted, even any dirty work.

“I need you to stay close to this transformation project. Get close to Gracie, that monkey and that young lion cub. Pretend you’re enthusiastic about it. Be their pal. Maybe you can find a skeleton in their closet. Feed me any dirt I can use.”

“For sure boss.” Jack nodded his head like a devoted flunky. “What about Gail the gazelle who’s representing your area on the Transformation team, and representing you on Leanne Sales and Growth Marketing sub-team? She should provide you with valuable info?”

Hal let go with his ear piercing laugh. “Gail’s a real winner, always has the best sales results. She’s right into the changes and pushing for even more in my area. Hate to admit it. But Gail’s a true star. She’s looking way too good these days. Can’t have that. May have to take her down a notch or two, or three. She’s not near as loyal to me as you are. I want the real goods on this transformation thing that only a predator like you can bring.”

That evening Max and Lester the lion cub put the final touches on the plan to now deliver Dream Coaching to all the staff at Jungle Tech. Tag made the request to Max yesterday. Tag sensed the positive results coming from the IVine Dream Coaching Max conducted. So he wanted everyone at Jungle Tech to experience that same Dream Coaching.

Lester learned the Dream Model, sat in on a number of coaching sessions and stood ready to coach some of the Jungle Tech interns.

"Your father Leo would be proud of you," said Max. "You've been a big help to me."

Lester rubbed his paws together. "I've learned so much. Love the DREAM model. And I'm ready to roar."

Leanne paraded in and interrupted Max and Lester, "Must talk to Lester."

The lion cub perked up and smiled. Lester wanted to spend time with Leanne. He hoped for information and a closer relationship with a certain someone special.

Max knew it'd be hard to develop the relationship that Lester was seeking. But if anyone could do it, it might be Lester. Two individuals with vastly different agendas doing the lunch thing. We'll have to see how that worked out, thought Max.

The young lion cub stammered, "Sure, sure Leanne. Anything you say."

"Bye Max," Leanne said with a smirk as she led Lester away. "Lester, Let me tell you what it is like to be a top performer. Maybe you could let your father know how great I am. Sometimes I think Leo doesn't realize that fact."

Jack the jackal hung about the transformation team that afternoon, scrounging around looking for info. He was being a general nuisance. Paula said, "Jack, I notice the new sales numbers are released. You may want to be out with potential clients rather than bothering us."

"With Hal's sales numbers I'm still number one," bragged Jack.

"That behavior won't be going on any longer," Paula stated with a firm tone, sending a shiver down Jack's spine.

Hal sent an email to Leanne as he drank at the tennis club that same day. “The new sales numbers are showing Zelda’s Sales and Solutions West area way ahead of my area already. She’s blowing away the industry numbers. I hate this measurement craze. We must stop it.”

Leanne fired back a message to Hal with an emoji of a falling star. “Got to stop that Zebra!”

Leanne was determined to become more aggressive in that stop the zebra campaign. She’d go to Tag. She stormed into Tag’s office and let out a high pitched scream, “How dare you make Zelda the TIC when you were away? I’m the top performer on your team. The best in our industry.”

“You’ve had your turn as the TIC. We’d nothing but trouble. Our animals and especially the frightened birds were lining up to quit, and so were customers.”

“That was Zelda’s fault,” yelled Leanne as she stomped her paw. “I’m really running the transformation project. I’m carrying Zelda. She should be fired!”

“As I indicated in your executive review, You should be worrying more about your performance as the leader of Growth Marketing, rather than scratching and clawing your way to the top.”

Leanne slashed the air with her paw, showing her razor sharp claws. “You haven’t seen scratching and clawing yet. You know nothing. Not even what your wife is doing.”

Chapter 27 - Rewarding The Animals

The next day Rock walked by Sophia's desk on his way to Tag's office for the meeting concerning the overall rewards for staff in a transformed Jungle Tech. Sophia decided to use the oldest trick in the book. Accidentally, she knocked some papers on the floor to gain Rock's attention. Rock being a gentle-rhino, he picked the papers up. Meanwhile Sophia eyed his muscular body. She said loudly for all to hear. "Thank you Rock. You're so sweet! How can I ever reward you?"

Camilla heard the exchange from her office, slumping in her chair. She wondered if she could ever compete with that fresh new reward package? Or should she simply sabotage the slippery reptile?

Sophia received a glimpse of the second quarter financials an hour later. They weren't great. Better then last quarter but wouldn't be good enough. Time for her to get closer to the Garth camp. Even though, he disgusted her. But he scared her even more. She slithered off into a corner and used her cell to leave a message.

"Hi, Sophia here, just to let you know the second quarter results are in. They're better. But still aren't meeting forecast. I think it'll be the last quarter that they'll fall short of expectations. Tag's really changing Jungle Tech. Bye Garth."

Later that day both Tag and Leo received a call from Garth, insisting on a special emergency meeting of the inner circle board of Jungle Tech. It'd only include Garth, Leo, and Tag. Garth thought of Tag as merely a paid servant. But he did control Tanya's 3% for now.

Grudgingly, Leo and Tag agreed. Except, Leo insisted the meeting be in his den. That evening all three were on time and ready for battle. After the customary paw and hand

shakes, they sat down around Leo's simple and practical office furniture.

Garth kicked it off. "Leo, with all your cash, don't you feel like it is time to upgrade your office furniture? Time to come out of the dark." Garth waved his hand, ensuring to flash his diamond rings in Leo's face. "You can take the lion from the jungle. But you can't take the jungle from the lion."

"I love this old furniture! Been good luck for me. Built solid. I can pound my paw on it," Leo gave the table a solid whack. "Look, doesn't budge. Real practical. Now let's get on with it."

Garth cleared his throat. He thought of himself as fearless. But he'd never want to get caught alone with Leo in the deep dark jungle. He felt unsure who the real king would be there. But he'd never let these two kittens see any fear on him.

Garth cleared his voice again and said, "I want to discuss the less then desirable second quarter financial results that have just come out."

"Not that I have anything to hide," snarled Tag. "But how did you get your hands on them? Just received them myself."

"I've my sources," said Garth with a smirk.

Tag's tail shot straight up. He was furious. Those were very preliminary numbers. There were only a handful of individuals who'd have access.

Leo asked, "How are they?"

Tag answered with a sheepish look about him, "There's an improvement over last quarter. A slight profit. But we didn't make the forecast. We did stop the downward trend of the past four quarters. We're just getting into the meat of the changes. It'll take some time. Also, there's IVine to bring on

board for which we have accrued some integration costs in the second quarter."

Garth hit the desk, hurting his hand. "Excuses, that's all you give. Not good enough." Garth massaged his throbbing hand. "I can't tolerate this type of performance. You missed your forecast. I'm a successful business gorilla for a reason. The transformation's done nothing. Zelda's done nothing. That blind monkey's done nothing. They've all had long enough. Time for Garth's type of action."

Leo kicked his table. "Tag and the team have been making great progress. You know damn well you can't turn Jungle Tech around in one quarter. Tag, Zelda and Max have assured me that we'll see more positive results in the next quarter. Let's get real Garth."

"Sorry cats, not going to cut it, I want to break up Jungle Tech. Can get more for it if we break it into various parts and sell them off. I may want one or two components. They'd go well with Gorilla Net."

Leo roared, "No way! That's so short sighted. I worked the real break up value. Jungle Tech's worth much more if it is kept in tact. Not gonna happen while I am Chair of the Board."

"Too bad," warned Garth. "You'd be wise to see things my way."

"Let's put it on the table. What do you really want Garth?"

"I want all of Jungle Tech. You can sell me controlling interest." Garth paused and looked at Leo and Tag. They both shook their heads.

"Leo, I could go public on your little indiscretion a number of years ago," threatened Garth. "Would that change your mind? Recently, Archie made Garth aware of the result of Leo's mistake with Leanne."

Leo ground his hind paws into the floor. “Not a chance! My family and I have nothing to hide.” Leo licked his lips. “But if you want to play that kinda game, I seem to remember a number of major indiscretions of yours that your daddy smoothed over.”

Garth gripped his chair, breaking one of his manicured nails, as well as breaking into a sweat. It took him a second to re-gain his composure. “Okay cats, it goes down like this. I’ll wait until the next quarterly results are released. If those third quarter results aren’t outstanding, beating forecast. And Jungle Tech isn’t number one in its industry as measured by third quarter revenue, then I’ll raise all sorts of hell. I’ll have the board mutiny against you two kittens. I’ll take Jungle Tech from you. There are many ways to skin a cat.”

Tag displayed his fangs. “Number one is a long term vision. You know that.”

“That’s not what I’m expecting. Or what I’ll convince our other board members of. You have one quarter.”

Leo roared as he rose, “Go ahead and try. It’ll be a hell of a fight. Let me show you the door.”

“You wait. I have the money to bury you,” Garth threatened as he stood and glared at Leo. Except, his legs shook.

Leo fired a last shot, “Garth you’ve been slowly squandering your daddy’s fortune. You haven’t worked a day in your life. You’re a spoiled tennis brat who hasn’t grown up. Go home to your mommy. You’re not a tenth of the gorilla your dad was.”

That struck a nerve with Garth. He bounded out of the office toward his waiting limo, furious. He was heading straight to the Tennis Club. There’s a place he gets a little respect he thought. He wanted to talk to Samson. It’s time for Samson to make his big move. Time for Leanne and Hal to be

offered something more substantial to ensure their co-operation. Leanne's all about her title. Hal's all about more cash.

Also, he fired off a message to Archie with an emoji of a fist. "Time to play rough!"

After Garth departed, Tag stared off into space and muttered, "I wonder how many spies Garth has planted in Jungle Tech?"

"Good question. We'll have to be careful. But first, if we do our jobs right, we won't have to care about that political bullshit. Second, if that's the way Garth wants it, we'll find out who is slipping him info. Maybe we'll use them to our advantage." Leo wore a big lion smile that'd have scared any jungle animal. "And maybe we'll reward." Leo whacked the table. "Reward the damn traitor appropriately."

Chapter 28 - Skills To Survive In The Jungle

Three days later Leo called Max at first light and asked, "How'd your meeting with the president of jTel go?"

"Leo, it was lengthy and somewhat painful. No wonder jTel is in trouble. He lacks the leadership skills to be a President. He also has little desire in developing the required skills. You'll not turn jTel around with that orangutang in the President's chair."

"Damn, that's what I thought," muttered Leo. "Are you sure with your magic touch you couldn't help turn jTel around with him as president?"

"Sorry Leo, not a chance."

“Makes the deal messier. He’s a tiny ownership position in jTel. Guess I knew that all the time. But hoped to avoid the pain.”

“Leo, there’s a solid candidate right here in Jungle Tech who has Presidential skills.”

Leanne pranced into Zelda’s office that afternoon with her smug smile, determined to make a point. “Zelda, I’ve been thinking about the transformation project. I’ve to admit the project is progressing okay. Certainly, the Sales and Growth Marketing turn around led by myself has been the key to any success. But I don’t mind you and the others riding on my tail.”

Zelda spoke with a cautious tone, “Yes Leanne, thank you for your efforts. You’ve been a key player. And Gail the gazelle has been a real gem.”

“Gail’s nothing.” Leanne pointed a claw at herself. “I am the only star. This project’s another example of my exceptional leadership skills. Becoming more and more apparent to those who count, who will make the best President. And you know I’m close with those who count. I’m a shoe in for the next presidential opening in the jungle.”

“You certainly know the right players.”

“Glad you see it that way, and know your place in the jungle,” Leanne said with a patronizing smile. “Someone who is not well informed might think your skills and capabilities are suited to a higher role. However, you should be very happy how far you have come for an older zebra.”

Sophia watched Gracie and Rock laughing the next day. Gracie showed him how his skill profile looked. Sophia grimaced. Rock seemed so relaxed. Sophia wondered why couldn’t the handsome rhino be like that with her? Also, the

snake wondered if she'd have to put her under handed skills to work again? That was one skill she would never put in the Jungle Tech skill inventory.

Leanne headed home early that day as she walked by Gracie's workstation. The giraffe stated, "Leanne, you're the only employee in Jungle Tech who refused to put their skills in the inventory. Even Tag put his in."

Leanne snapped back, "An executive of my superior status does not have time to list all my skills. I'd be there all day."

"Right," said Gracie laughing. "Your verbal crap might fool some. But I'm calling your bluff. I think you talk about how much you know because you're covering something up."

That struck a nerve with Leanne and she fled, grasping for her pill bottle. She asked herself, are other animals beginning to see her skill gaps and see through her charade? How much do they know about her addiction? How much do they know about her past?

Garth consumed another drink at the club the following afternoon, smacking his lips. He kept going back and forth on whether he wanted the transformation project to die now, or for it to have success so he could take the credit. He hated this back and forth game that played in his gorilla brain.

One thing Garth knew for sure, he wanted more spies planted in Jungle Tech. He sent a message to Paula the parrot with an emoji of a king's crown. "Want bartender and poker pal hired."

Paula fired back a message. "Please follow hiring process."

Garth sent a message to Leanne. "Go scare that parrot! Trash that zebra too!"

Two minutes later Leanne called up Paula and demanded, “Zelda needs to be fired. If it was not for my outstanding leadership the transformation project would be going nowhere.”

“What are you talking about?” Paula asked.

“Just fire her,” commanded Leanne. “The senior executives tell you who to terminate. Don’t you parrots ever get it?”

“No way! You have Tag come and tell me to do it. Even then I’ll fight it.” Paula fumed at this latest under-handed tactic by the leopard. “Leanne, let’s go and talk to Tag about this. This has to stop.”

Leanne ended the call, thinking she wasn’t getting the respect she deserved. Whose cage did she have to rattle to get that respect? Whose branch did she have to shake? Or whose cave did she have to warm?

Chapter 29 - Jungle Tennis Can Get Rough

A week later Max headed out on a walk, A familiar voice yelled, “Max, you got a second?”

“For you, Archie, of course. How are you doing?”

“Doing fine, wondered if you had a minute to talk. I wanted to know what you think I’m good for?”

“Sure Archie, there’s a park bench around here. I’ve run into it once or twice on my travels. Let’s have a seat.”

“Was passing by on my way to lunch. Wanna come? Won’t take long Max.”

“Okay! I’d love to talk. Already had lunch, but I‘ll join you. Maybe I’ll have a tasty dessert, banana cream pie sounds great. But will you please bring me back to the office?”

“Sure, sure, jump in my car and we’ll head down to the tennis club for a bite.”

“All right Archie. Let’s go.”

The two enjoyed a cordial conversation as they cruised along. Except, when Max started to ask questions about what Archie was doing since leaving Jungle Tech, the ape became evasive. They arrived at the club. As they stepped in to the front entrance, Max heard a male and female laughing and flirting like a couple of high school kids. Also, he smelt the distinct smoke from a joint of that special jungle wacky tabacky.

For Samson the Siberian tiger had a multiple addiction problem. Between the Russian vodka, the weed, the cocaine, the performance enhancing drugs for his tennis game, and the performance enhancing drugs for his sex game, he slipped from one vice to the other in heavy dozes.

A voice boomed out with a slight Russian accent, “Hey Archie, who’s your little friend?”

Archie cleared his throat and looked around nervously. He didn’t want to be seen by anyone. “Ah, um, this is Max the monkey.”

Samson inquired, “Can the blind monkey play tennis or have any skills in sports for that matter?” The tennis tiger roared with stoner laughter at his own joke.

“Oh you’re so bad. Samson that’s not nice,” came the breathy female’s voice, standing close to Samson.

“Archie, are you going to cut up his meat?” Samson asked, taking a pull from the joint.

“Oh, Samson stop!” came from the female voice.

“No way man. Too much fun.”

Archie shuffled like an awkward two stepper. He was speechless. Max counted to ten. He wished characters like this didn't get to him.

Samson continued to laugh and said, "Hey, Archie, guide him into a wall. Wanna see what happens. Can the sightless shrimp?"

Max cut off Samson with a loud voice. "Pleased to meet you Samson. For your future reference the next time you meet a monkey that's blind, talk to them directly. I speak the same language as you and don't need an interpreter. Now, as for your condescending comments, pick your sport buddy. Put on a blind fold and let's go at it. I'll even give you a head start or few extra points."

Samson protested. Tanya and the crowd started to chuckle, but at Samson's expense this time.

"Now as far as cutting my meat Samson. How thoughtful. I didn't think a creature such as you would know what a knife and fork are used for. How about you cut up my meat? But you'd have to wash the scum off those paws of yours before hand."

Samson stammered, "You-you little."

Tanya interjected, "Hi Max, my name is Tanya. I apologize for Samson's rude behavior. Welcome to the club. I've heard nothing but great things about you. So nice to meet you."

"Pleased to meet you Tanya. Sorry, I let myself fall into that." Max shrugged. "No hard feelings." Max stuck out his hand. Samson took it reluctantly.

"Ya sure man," muttered Samson.

After the tense discussion Max and Archie proceeded to the back room. They settled at a luxurious and private table. Max had been guided to an uncomfortable chair that was jammed up into the corner. Max was getting nervous as his

alarm bells were going off. Archie stayed quiet. Max sensed they weren't alone.

"Who else is in the room?" Max asked.

"Never mind little monkey. Time for you to see the light," said a gruff and unfamiliar voice.

"Who is this? Although I might hazard a guess. Pleased to meet you, Garth."

The gorilla rose from his chair. "You guessed right. Now I talk. You listen."

Max sighed and shifted. These two gave off an aggressive odor. He'd have to be on his guard.

Garth shook his fist at Max. "I want you out of Jungle Tech. Go if you know what's good for you."

Max took his time and said, "First off, nice move Archie but why the shenanigans? Garth, why didn't you call me and set something up?"

"Things are done on my terms little blind monkey," replied Garth. "You're nothing. An inferior species. I really shouldn't be talking to you. I want you out right now!"

"Hey Archie, I didn't know you became Garth's gopher," said Max as he was beginning to relax and wanting to throw them off their guard.

Archie stuck out his chest. "I ain't no."

Garth interrupted, "Shut up, Arch, you're my puppet. So shut up. I'll tell you when to grunt."

Archie cowered in the corner and went silent while Max laughed out loud. This aggravated Garth even more. Garth hammered his fist on the table and let out a jungle growl. "I'll speak one more time. You're to leave Jungle Tech. Got it!"

Max laughed again. "You can't threaten me. I'm there to help everyone and to help fix Jungle Tech. Time for me to go."

Archie grunted out, “You ain’t fixing nothing, you little.”

Once again Garth yelled out, “Shut up Arch. I’ll handle this. You’ve done your part. Unless of course, I need you to help apply a little more persuasion on our sightless friend. It won’t take much with such a little monkey. I think if we just pounded our chests he would break into pieces.” Archie and Garth commenced their jocular laughter.

“Gentle-animals, and I use that term loosely. I’m leaving before this gets out of hand. I just heard a physical threat. You don’t want to go farther.”

Garth smacked a fist into his palm. He stepped closer to Max. Archie grunted repeatedly and moved in from the other side with both fists clinched. To their total amazement, Max rose, whipping out his white cane and placed it in a defensive position. Clearly, Max could handle himself with or without that cane. All those hours developing his martial arts skills paid off. There was stunned silence from Garth and Archie. They were in shock and so was Max!

Max took a step toward the door. “I’ll have a taxi called and I’m out of here. Make one more aggressive move toward me and all hell will break loose. Think hard about what the papers will say. Blind monkey attacked by playboy gorilla and muscle bound ape.”

Garth shook his fist. “I’ll break you in two. Arch hit him!”

Max felt the two lunging for him. Except, Archie was moving in with much more purpose. Lightening quick, Max whipped his cane to freeze Archie. Also, Max delivered a round house kick, flashing by Garth’s head, halting his progress. The two were paralyzed. Max was shaking and only had a few seconds to vacate.

Max took one more verbal shot before he bolted out the door, “I may keep this little incident to myself. I may or may not keep the fact that you two clowns were behind that customer issue to myself. But the transformation project goes forward. You can fight for control of the company. But the project goes on without interference from either of you clowns. Got it!”

Garth and Archie stared in stun silence as Max gingerly navigated his way out of the door and down the hall to the front desk. Max thought, no wonder Tag hated this tennis club. This Garth was in a whole new league when it came to dirty tactics. Leo was right about Garth. He’d stop at nothing to acquire Jungle Tech.

Chapter 30 - Sharing Jungle Info

Hal and Jack the jackal hung in one of the local bars for another dirt session as the hyena liked to refer to them. Jack had been keeping Hal up to date, promising some sleazy info that’d give the hyena an advantage over this transformation team or anyone else.

Even scraping up info on that monkey would be pleasing to Hal. For Max had been at Jungle Tech over four months, and the place was turning upside down. Hal would love to throw a curve into things, and Garth had been upping the cash motivation in a big way. But so far, Jack offered up Hal little dirt on anyone.

“Okay, Jack, what’d you got?”

“Well, boss, this has been a tough one. Not that they don’t share with me. Just the opposite. They share everything,

the good and bad. But somehow I'm not getting dirt we could actually use against them. The young lion cub took to me at first. Then he became more careful. I feel like the blind monkey sees right through me. Makes me nervous. Got no real dirt on the team. But I've talked to Sophia. She's not happy about all the changes. Especially, the executive communication process. She feels her power's slipping."

Hal scratched his chin. "Hmm, could be useful info down the road."

"Oh one more piece of info," Jack said smirking, "Sophia confided that Tanya's playing a lot of tennis these days. She's using more and more of Samson's snow candy. Also, Sophia said Tanya isn't totally happy with how things are running at Jungle Tech. That'd be the first time Tanya actually cared."

Hal put on his slyest of grins. "Now you're talking, you keep digging. And get that nose digging deep."

Camilla flagged Max down on one of his walks in the park early the next morning. The cougar beamed as she caught up to him. "I sincerely want to thank you for allowing me to share my issue. It assisted me greatly."

"My pleasure Camilla. How's it going?"

"Splendid, I'm becoming a more balanced cougar. And a more focused cougar as well." For in the Motivation Beyond Achievement phase, Max encouraged her to visualize her accomplished goals every morning.

She carried on, "I am achieving so much more. It's been invigorating! I've plunged into distance running as a hobby. I never imagined I was capable. With considerable training I'm now entered in my inaugural marathon."

"Fantastic!"

“In addition, I have become a big sister. I love it, as it fills a void in my own life. Since I have no kittens of my own. It is so rewarding. Also I met someone more my age. I am venturing on my first date in ages. Thank you Max, I simply needed to put it in perspective.” She grimaced. “However, I wish Rock wasn’t so cold toward me. But I am no longer turning into jelly whenever he is present. There is simply one more matter I need to address.” She raised her sharp claws. “Scratching out a certain snake’s troublemaking eyes.”

Lester the lion cub sent a message to Leanne. “So awesome the way we shared! Put the picture we took up on my Facebook page.” Of course, Lester hoped Leanne would put up a photo of them on her page as well. He really wanted someone to see it.

Max and Paula were settled in for one of their numerous sessions. Paula chirped excitedly about the goals she was making progress on. Her confidence soared. Paula reflected, “I can’t believe where we’ve come from in these past five months.”

“And I can’t believe how far you’ve come as a leader,” responded Max.

“But you’re the one guiding me.”

“Less and less,” said Max. “Your leadership skills are accelerating every day. Let’s take the integration of IVine for example, what a great job you did on the animal resource aspects. You and your team were amazing. One of the best integrations I’ve ever known. I am really proud of you.”

“Thank you Max, that means a lot coming from you. You know, that Time Management exercise you took me through in the Motivation Beyond Achievement phase has

helped me to no end. I sometimes look in the mirror and go Wow! I did all that."

"It's you Paula, and you're amazing! And the exec communications process you drive is going great!"

Paula shut her eyes, cringing. "Yesterday, Sophia attempted to intimidate me into going back to the way she handled things before."

"And how'd it go?"

Paula flapped her wings. "Not a chance. All her hissing fell on deaf ears."

"You're a true leader Paula."

"And Max, Tag shares with me like I'm a true confident. A real VP of Animal Resources. Or shall I say Animal, Bird and Reptile Resources. Time for a name change."

One reptile, who hated the new sharing craze, promoted by Tag and the transformation team, was Sophia. She felt pissed the way Tag revealed confidential information to others which previously only she would have known.

These changes were usurping her power. That power she loved flaunting in her subtle fashion. She'd have to talk to Tag about her concern. She'd straighten him out. And it'd go better then her intimidation tactics with Paula yesterday. Snakes were supposed to scare every animal and bird. What was happening to her jungle?

Except, Tag beat her to the punch. He returned from a customer call with a huge grin. He inquired, "Sophia, you got a minute?"

"Sure boss."

"We just nailed another large client. That's two this week. Wow! The Sales and Solutions West area is on fire. Whatever we are transforming in there, is working. Things are really humming."

Purposely, Tag fed Sophia a great deal of confidential information. He suspected she was sharing this info with certain board members. Leo and Tag were setting her up with great news. They knew if great news would continue to flow to Garth, he'd make his move quicker and in more haste. He may make a mistake. They wanted the show down as much as Garth.

"Sophia, I know you are sharing confidential information with certain board members."

"I-I-I never do anything like that. I'm loyal to you." Sophia explained way too quickly for her own good.

"I know it's you. It's okay. Has been helping Jungle Tech and me by having some of this info released early to certain individuals. The old Tag would have fired you. I want to thank you."

Sophia began to curl up, her head darting about, looking for a rock to crawl under. She'd been caught. She was embarrassed.

"Why don't we have an understanding?" Tag asked with a sympathetic tone. "Your trust is critical to me. Do you want to start fresh? I need your trust. If I am kicked out you'll still have a job."

"Thank you Tag, I-I'm sorry. I was scared."

"I understand Sophia. Let's forget the past. We've got an exciting future ahead of us. We're going to be number one. We need you. Are you in? No more games."

"Absolutely Tag! I am in. I promise no more games!"

Sophia realized that Tag had changed a lot. Could she change? She'd try. No more of that back room stuff. She wondered if Tanya had seen the changes in Tag? Sophia knew their marriage was in the tank. The snake blamed Tag for the most part. But she wondered if Tanya would give the new Tag a second chance? Tag had become a much better leader. She

thought he wanted to be a much better husband as well. Sophia hoped for both their sakes it wasn't too late.

Sophia hoped for her own sake it wasn't to late. She wondered if she could truly change. She grabbed her cell. "Max, I need coaching! And I need it now!"

That night Tanya the tigress received a call while dining with a group of friends at the tennis club. "Tanya here," she said as she held up her tiny pink phone next to her three karat diamond earring.

"Hi sweetheart, it's Samson. Having fun darling?"

That virile tiger voice sent shivers down Tanya's back. She couldn't get him out of her mind. Samson excited her. Tag had no use for "That lover boy" as Tag called him. Tag and Samson went to tiger school together. Tag advanced his career through determination and hard work. Samson was a good time tiger and never worked much. He loved to play! But Tanya felt so good around gorgeous Samson. She felt so good on the highs he got her on.

"What would you like?" Tanya asked with a sensual voice.

"Never ask me that Tanya darling, especially, when you're as hot as you are."

"You're so bad!"

"How about you and I meet for a little drink away from the club?"Samson asked with a sexual overtone. "Little tucked away place. Share a little info. Share a little tennis talk. Lob and volley."

"Oh I don't know. Only talking tennis?"

"Of course not," said a smirking Samson. "Why talk at all?"

"You're such a naughty tiger. Oh okay. You talk a tigress into it. Where and when?"

“Shady Lane Motel has a lounge next door. Say one hour. I’ll bring my racket. Cheers!”

Tanya knew Samson was bad for her. But she couldn’t resist him. She’d seen the change in Tag. She enjoyed the new Tag. The way Tag tried to share with her. But Samson, well she’d wanted him for months. She wanted to run her paws over his muscles and over his sexy tattoos, especially the one of a human skull and bones. She was going for it. She excused herself from the dinner party, and away she went. Tanya headed off on her own adventure and to hell with the consequences.

Yes, this jungle has consequences.

Chapter 31 - Identity In The Dark Jungle

After Samson ended the call, he snorted a little snow candy for his next meeting. He found Garth in the tennis club lounge. Samson demanded, “I want to be President of Jungle Tech.” Garth began to choke on his exotic cocktail. Samson carried on, “It’d mean a lot to me to be seen as more than a tennis hunk with no brains. If I get Tanya in your back pocket then you must change my identity to that of a president.”

At the same time over at Jungle Tech the transformation team was solidifying their identity. Zelda exclaimed, “We’re going to do it. I can see the light at the end of the tunnel. Have to run. Thanks you two and bye.”

Gail the gazelle and Max were the last two remaining, after a very successful update meeting for the transformation project. The transformation team rode high after a series of

outstanding progress reports. That milestone meeting in every successful project where the team realized they're going to be a part of something special, providing there are no hidden obstacles waiting to burst their bubble.

"I'm excited for Jungle Tech and the transformation team," Gail said in a sincere tone. "I've never felt so much purpose to my work. Or identified with anything like this transformation. This project was such a refreshing experience for me, compared to, well you know," Gail admitted with her high pitched voice dropping off.

"Gail, we couldn't have done this without your work on both the transformation team and Leanne's Sales And Growth Marketing team. Is it safe to assume you're not enthused about the situation in the Sales and Solutions East area? Or is it how Leanne treated you on her Sales and Growth Marketing sub team?"

For in the sub team meetings, Leanne went after Gail the gazelle constantly. Yet, Gail was the main reason the sub team found any success. Some of the sub team members whispered to Max, that Gail really led them. Her speed at driving results rated as amazing. While Leanne would stride in, telling everyone how great she was, then stride out, leaving Gail to run things.

Gail rolled her eyes. "Leanne was a piece of work. But we got the job done to spite her at times. She's not the issue. You're Dream Coaching really helped me with that." She let out a heavy sigh. "But Hal's another issue. I can't stand working for that hyena, and the culture he promotes. Hard to identify with his style. I've been offered another position with our competition. I'm seriously considering it. I love Jungle Tech but hate the ethics of Hal. It's clear by the numbers I'm outshining his favorite pets. Yet, he deliberately attempts to criticize my performance."

“Your future’s bright at Jungle Tech,” stated Max. “With your exceptional leadership skills, sales skills, industry knowledge, and credibility, I hope we can work this out.”

“Max, I don’t want to appear like a whiner. With what I know about Hal, I’d rather just leave.”

Leanne called Lester the lion cub the next day. “Just wondering if you have shared with your dad that I am amazing and what a great president I would make? You know how much it means to me.”

“Told Dad we had a great time,” Lester replied. “And we were getting to know each other. But how about we go for lunch again?”

Leanne ended their so called friendship. “You are history. I cannot waste my time with someone who doesn’t do what I tell them. Good-bye.”

Lester was shaken, what was he going to do now? He called Max.

“You love Jungle Tech,” stated Camilla.

Tag eased back in his chair. “It means a lot to me. But Thanks to the Dream Guru over these past five months, it isn’t my only passion. It isn’t the only thing that I identify with.”

“Certainly Tag, I can relate. I know what it’s like to have a one track passion.”

“I’m so glad you’re fitting in, and connecting with the company and the executive team. I know how hard it was for you when you first moved to the jungle. And then you know that Rock issue.”

“This is embarrassing Tag!”

“Don’t be embarrassed. I know your feelings for him are over. We both have found so much more meaning by opening up to the Dream Guru.”

Harvey the hippo came by Max’s work space during lunch two days later. “Max, you got a minute to go for a walk?”

“Always got time for you Harvey.”

“One area I wanted to open up about.” Harvey tightened his lips. “But am afraid. Big time afraid to be identified as one of them.”

“What is it?”

“Been embarrassed for years.” Harvey stood taller. “It is time for this hippo to come out of the closet. Please help me go public. I’m gay.”

“Max, how long does it take someone to identify with an organization?” Percy the peacock asked as he and Max strolled back from an executive meeting the following morning.

Max and Percy enjoyed many Dream Coaching sessions since his joining Jungle Tech. The pretty peacock flew through the five phases of the DREAM model with one of his goals revolving around judgement. Percy wanted to reduce his habit of over judging, especially on an animals or birds appearance. The peacock recognized real beauty lived inside. He was determined to improve his inner self. As part of Percy’s Motivation Beyond Achievement phase, Max had him use the Pretend You Can’t Fail exercise.

“Takes less time to identify then one thinks,” replied Max. “Now sustaining that feeling of identification is another challenge. It is interesting how many of the staff from the old IVine are identifying with the new Jungle Tech, more rapidly

than some of the old Jungle Tech staff. You're a great example of that Percy."

"I sure identify with Jungle Tech. But you're a big part of that. You've got me to look at others and myself so differently. Thank you. But you are right. We at IVine were being merged in? We knew we had to change, verses some of the old Jungle Tech staff who didn't think the transformation would effect them."

"Big part of it Percy, along with your own outstanding leadership and the efforts of the IVine integration team."

"On top of that," said Percy. "Those Dream Coaching sessions you're doing with former IVine staff. It was like icing on the cake for the majority of us. We figured if any organization would go to that extent to listen and engage, then we wanted to be identified with that organization."

Chapter 32 - Meaning In The Jungle

That night Rock dropped his body down in Max's workspace. "Okay Dream Guru, you've done tons of coaching sessions with the staff. What stands out?"

"First thing I realized," replied Max. "Many of the animals and birds find more meaning in working for Jungle Tech, then some on the executive team. Some executives are so caught up in the politics, and who is stabbing who in the back that the whole trust issue is effecting how executives relate to Jungle Tech."

Rock rubbed his horn. "Certain board members seem to be calling certain execs more frequently."

“For sure Rock. Been a huge increase in shady dealings after the last quarterly results. Fueling this exec distrust issue much more.”

Max asked Rock if he trusted everyone on the executive team. Rock said he thought he did. But some shocking news came to light that’s left him disappointed with Camilla.

“Can you share that information?” Max inquired.

“Not yet, I believe it’d jeopardize your opinion of Camilla. I’m not sure that’d be productive now.” Rock wandered off with his shoulders slumped.

Max felt his sadness. He’d now turn to the trust issue within that executive team. The executive team was going to be a challenge with respect to trust. Certainly, it was one of the key issues which arose out of the coaching sessions. Many staff said they didn’t trust the executive team. Also, they believed the members of the executive team didn’t trust each other. Max thought they were oh so right.

Hal sent a message with an emoji of a bag of cash to Leanne. “Garth means business!” He followed up with another. “Upping his efforts!”

Leanne sent a message with an emoji of a bomb exploding. “I’m finding more meaning in his demolition game!”

Hal fired Leanne a message with an emoji of a STOP sign. “We must stop Zelda’s area from rocking!”

Leanne called Hal on the cell, “I agree, Zelda’s West results are outstanding. They make you look weak. Tag must be stopped as well! But according to the naive young lion cub, that I just called to dangle a carrot, and got juicy info, there is big news coming out of Leo’s office.”

Meanwhile Tag and Leo were catching up on Jungle Tech business when Leo blurted out, “Tag, the deal’s done! I’ve bought jTel. I got full control with Triple Anonymous having a small piece of the action.”

“Wow, you did it! Congratulations Leo. That jTel is a big fish to reel in.”

“Tag do you wanna run the new jTel?”

“Thanks for the vote of confidence,” replied Tag, “But a big part of me is Jungle Tech. Got to see this transformation through to the end.”

“It’ll get you out of the situation with the board, and your problems with Garth. It may even help with you and Tanya, by taking the Jungle Tech board politics away.”

“I know Leo. But it means a lot to me to go for number one. Even if it means I take the chance, Garth will get me out. I’m afraid the issue between Tanya and I is deeper than Jungle Tech. I’m going to try my best to be a better husband. But where I work isn’t the issue.”

“I wish you and Tanya luck. Respect your decision to stay. We’re gonna make Jungle Tech something special. Now, do you have any suggestions for who I can get to run this new telecom toy I got my paws on?”

Lester the lion cub came to talk to Max the next morning, sounding sad and tired. Lester whispered, “Some animals are just users?”

“Yes, a few are.”

“Leanne used me to get my dad to think of her as president material. When I didn’t come through, she ignored me. Then she called, trying to get info from me. I didn’t mean to.” Lester hung his head. “But I may have spilled some beans. Feel like a fool. The truth is I was using her too. I’m trying to connect with Liam.”

“It’s tough. Don’t be hard on yourself. Does Leo know what you were doing?”

“No, but I just want my entire family to be together. There’s nothing to be ashamed of. Leanne should know that.” Lester sighed. “Now on another matter, after being a part of my first coaching project here at Jungle Tech, I’m having trouble finding meaning in what I’m learning at university. What actually goes on in the real jungle isn’t like they teach us at school. I’m not going back to university.”

Late that night Garth seemed to be finding his own type of sick meaning from the many cocktails he consumed at the club. He thought of the manner in which he turned up the heat on his Jungle Tech pawns over the past couple of months. He dangled many carrots, waved many threatening sticks. He’d harassed them all frequently, harassing the females even more.

He received a message and yelled out for all to hear, “Leo bought jTel. How can he afford it?”

Samson the Siberian tiger guzzled a full glass of Russian vodka. “Did Leo steal another deal from you?”

“No, he didn’t,” growled Garth. “Exactly what I wanted. As I want him to be over his head. Now I can strike fast and strike hard.”

Chapter 33 - Does Trust Live In The Jungle

Max’s cell rang out early the next morning and a panic struck Leo yelled, “It’s happening. Silver spoon boy is buying up shares at the Jungle Stock Exchange. Garth’s offered a

very inflated price. He now owns 46% of Jungle Tech's stock. Happened so fast!"

"Relax Leo. You've got your 48%. Have Tag and Tanya sold their 3%?"

"No! No! They've done nothing. But well, they're having their issues. This damn thing's getting way too close for comfort. We're heading for a show down. Garth's got too much Jungle Tech stock for my liking. He just pissed away the rest of his daddy's fortune. Triple Anonymous hasn't sold their 3% to Garth either. The next board meeting will be a wild one."

"It'll be a straight power play Leo. Right now you're still in control of Jungle Tech. Have you talked to Tag?"

"He's cool. But I know he's not so sure about Tanya. He claims all is well. But his voice quivers. I'm worried about the 3%. But I'm more worried about Tag and his marriage."

That morning a meeting unfolded that Sophia the snake dreaded ever since accepting Camilla's invite. Certainly, Sophia witnessed a change in Camilla. She was now connecting with more of the staff at Jungle Tech.

"Sophia, I wanted to have a confidential discussion on a rather sensitive subject," stated Camilla in a cool cougar voice. "I think we're both well aware of my previous and your current infatuation with a certain finance rhino."

Sophia responded with her head hung low, "I-I'll stay away."

This wasn't what Camilla had expected. Where was the brash, smart mouthed snake that Camilla would pounce on? "I wanted to inform you. I am seeing someone else. A bit more mature, therefore feel free to pursue Rock in whatever manner you see fit. I never had a chance with him anyway."

“Rock isn’t interested in me either,” stated Sophia with tears in her eyes. “Maybe he’s taken the odd glance, but Rock would never get serious about a snake like me.”

“Why wouldn’t he?” Camilla found herself feeling sorry for Sophia.

“Can I trust you?” Sophia inquired. “I’m not one who usually trusts or confides in others.”

In her coaching sessions with Max, two of her energizing goals were to finally tell the truth and finally show some loyalty. The break through came for Sophia in the Reality Scan phase. She saw herself in a different light when she did the Past self exercise. She became determined to shed some of her slippery old ways.

“Of course you can trust me. This is strictly confidential.” Camilla realized Sophia was opening up with no hidden agenda. Sophia’s genuine tears were flowing. Sophia told Camilla about the newspaper article. Camilla was shocked. How could something so private and personal be brought into the office? Now she understood the wall that Rock built up. Camilla would have to somehow explain the horrid story to the rhino. But how could she?

Later that day Tag located Max and invited him for a walk. Tag relayed the events of his discussion with Leo on the Jungle Tech stock buy up by Garth the gorilla. “This is scaring me. I’m not sure who to trust. I’ll only admit this to you. I don’t trust Tanya any more. When I talk she’s barely listening. She’s a million miles away.”

“Keep on trying,” encouraged Max.

“I sure will. I admit I still don’t trust all the executives, even with the work that we’ve done. I guess I’m the problem,” confessed Tag. “I’m too paranoid.”

“Only natural with the escalating board politics all around you. Until we get the whole trust issue worked out at the board level, it makes it difficult with the executive. Going to have to start with Leo and yourself taking the lead. I recognize Garth has another agenda. We’ll have to bring that to a closure as soon as possible. Although with the Jungle Tech executives, time to lay it on the line and take charge. We’re sitting at distrust. We must progress to at least Conditional Trust. Time to accelerate the process. Are you up for it?”

“Max, you know I’m ready.”

“Pack your bags Tag. We’re going on an adventure. Your entire team’s coming along and we’re inviting Leo to make a guest appearance. No one begs off. Even Sophia has to be there.”

“Where are we going Max? What are we going to do?”

“Going to bring things out in the open. We’re off to Jungle Island.”

Chapter 34 - Jungle Island

Two days before the executive session, Leanne yelled at Paula, “There’s no way I’m going to Jungle Island. I have too much class for that.”

“We’re all going. We’ve a lot of issues to work out as a team. In particular the trust issue.”

Paula’s firm tone left Leanne thinking twice about taking on the parrot. “Paula, no one around here trusts me. I don’t know why. They’re stupid. Well, not everyone. As Hal and I trust each other, sort of.”

“Leanne, the reason why no one trusts you may be uncovered at Jungle Island. Could be worth your while. Even Leo’s going to make an appearance.”

“Well, then! Maybe I will grace the team with my presence,” proclaimed Leanne with her nose in the air. ”After all its time for Leo to see that I am the real leader of the executive team.”

Max used the Jungle Island site in the past for those teams which needed to solidify their connections and carried major trust issues. The Jungle Tech executive team was used to the good life. They needed their lavish life styles disrupted, and their mind sets altered. They were going to get all of that on Jungle Island.

Outrage described the executive team’s first impression of the facilities at Jungle Island. Edward the elephant raised his trunk in the air. He blew out indignant words. Claiming he was not a barbarian and if anyone at the Polo Club found out about this. He might get kicked out of the club, or worse yet, laughed at.

The elephant peeked over at Max, shrugged sheepishly and roared with laughter. “Look at me, such a snob. That was the old Edward talking. Let me carry in all the supplies.”

Leo, Zelda and Tag found humor in the accommodations. Enthusiastically, they took up the challenge. Max caught a few scathing blasts from a couple executives. But it was like water off a duck’s back with a raincoat on. He repeated, “Just try to enjoy the experience.”

Leanne snorted, pouted and stomped her paws, demanding to be taken back home.

Leo smiled and commented, “That’s just how a spoiled cub would act. Here’s how I used to handle my cubs when they did that.” He put her to work along side himself. Leanne

perked up and took the opportunity to tell Leo of her extensive presidential skills. Leo hoped to hear more about Liam then Leanne.

As the hours wore on, the team lightened up and began to relax. The fire pit became the meeting place. They cooked, ate and even joked. Some humility returned to these leaders as they tested their less than adequate survival skills.

Max used his DREAM model to guide the group process. He introduced the first of their novel exercises for teams seeking trust. For example, the well known exercise, where one executive would catch another executive falling backwards. This was trust at its best. This particular event, and it always stood as an event, was always a hit with teams. Periodically, Max conducted these types of exercises, especially in the first hours of the session. He listened as the group began loosening up.

In this phase one, Max worked on relaxation and connections. Only a few minor issues between individuals arose. But in phase two, that process would be accelerated. The gloves would come off. But the team needed to warm up first.

Those who tried to hide didn’t get the chance. Sophia attempted to play the game, claiming she wasn’t really a part of the executive team. Therefore, she didn’t have to participate. Bullshit was called by the rest of the team. Sophia couldn’t slither away in a hole. Max whispered in her ear, reminding her of their last coaching session, calming her down. She smiled and started to engage, creating no political problems behind the scene.

Rock cleaned up around the campfire as Sophia approached him. Sophia thought to herself how she’d made some of her best moves with Rock. He’d limited response. It

was time to drop the slippery games, the way Max and her talked about.

Sophia asked with sincerity that Rock had never heard, “Rock, what do you like in someone who you were dating?”

Rock looked at her in shock. He stammered, “Ah, well I’m not sure. One thing I am sure of, I admire someone who is trustworthy. I hate being hurt.”

Sophia curled up into a ball. She was positive Rock heard about her spying and underhanded tactics. She remained silent. Now she was sure why Rock showed little interest.

“But Sophia, the other thing I admire is when someone makes a mistake and admits it. I should know as I’ve made my share. I like when the individual comes clean. Takes responsibility and then goes on.”

Sophia perked up. She thought maybe there was still a chance. But he’d never forgive her for what she’d done. After all it involved his precious numbers being passed to Garth, and what she did to Camilla. She’d already confessed and apologized to Camilla. It was now time to do the same with Rock.

Leo stayed longer than planned. He excelled in the role of camp cook and prankster. Leo’s enthusiasm helped liven up things in this phase one. Except, he’d have to move on at a certain point. When he did depart, the good stuff surfaced. Phase two kicked into high gear real quick.

The first major issue that surfaced, was the board dynamics. Yes, some of the executives talked privately to others on the board, mainly to Garth. There may have been some backstabbing going on. After some prodding, it was uncovered that there was major backstabbing going on, and plenty of it. Most agreed this was not healthy.

Although, they all swore they were behind Jungle Tech, and its drive to be number one. Yes, there would be some politics for control of Jungle Tech's board. Nevertheless, they agreed they wouldn't allow the politics to interfere in their pursuit of the goal. That was the best they would agree too.

As the session continued, there was major airing of differences between each other. Leanne and Hal went after Tag. The two blamed their previous lack of success in Growth Marketing and Sales on Tag and his leadership. Also, that if they'd not taken charge of the transformation project, the success Jungle Tech was experiencing wouldn't have occurred.

Leanne stated, "Tag, I believe I could run this company much more effectively than you. I am the key reason things are turning around."

A major hush fell over the team. Max stepped in and asked, "Leanne, what would you do differently if you were in charge?"

"I-I-I don't know. I simply see myself as the President of Jungle Tech. Tag has too many weaknesses. I want the job. I want the title. I want the power and status. There's a key player who thinks it should be mine."

"Thank you for coming out with that," said Max. "Except, right now the job is Tag's. If Tag has weaknesses then let's address them. If you attain the president's role one day, you may be sitting here having the same chat with your executive team. But for right now, let's deal with areas Tag can improve on."

Leanne looked down and began to list a few things Tag should be working on. Corrective actions were suggested. Hal chimed in with a couple of points. But when they started voicing their list of issues, one could tell they knew they were sounding petty.

Tag acted as a true leader. He listened hard. He didn't overreact. He handled the criticism like a pro. He promised to fix his weaknesses, thanking Leanne and Hal for their comments.

The other executives waited patiently, becoming frustrated with the pettiness of the situation. There was some pawing of the earth as they waited their turn. They went after Leanne and Hal. Zelda kicked it off when she said, "Don't you think this charade has gone on long enough?" A silence fell over the team. "It's apparent. Your self centered agendas are at the heart of every word you speak."

Percy the peacock piped in, "Do you two ever step back and look at yourselves? You couldn't care less about Jungle Tech or this team. You're just interested in yourself and the politics of the jungle."

Reluctantly, Edward attended the session. He felt with his new role he didn't fit. Tag and Max persuaded him to attend. He was a breath of fresh air. Edward issued an amusing laugh. "There was a time not long ago, I would have jumped in and issued some sarcastic comment about Jungle Tech and Tag's leadership. Now, I must say Leanne and Hal, what Zelda and Percy speak of is true. Tag has become an excellent President. Your efforts on the transformation project were not as stellar as you pronounce to any who will listen. Frankly, at times you two attempted to disrupt the project. All I can say is grow up as I have had to do. Please stop thinking of only yourself."

Most of the group cheered. Leanne and Hal snarled outrage. Max let them get into it. When it was about to break, he circled them back. At one point when Leanne was ready to go over the edge, and about to pop more pills, Max called for a break. He went off with Leanne for a walk.

Max explained the concept of blind ambition, which was where an animal can't accurately see, hear, or feel reality due to their obsession with advancing their career. Max explained she may one day use politics to attain a top job. But she should focus her efforts on ensuring her skills would match that lofty appointment. Leanne listened intently. She was still going to be a political animal. Yet, there was some acknowledgement of Max's points.

When the team reconvened, there were tears, rants, yelling, etc. Then the Jungle Tech executive team broke through. A symbolic event did it. Paula the parrot flew off and brought back a shovel. She pronounced, "The funeral starts right now. I am burying the past. We're moving forward." She threw dirt on a pile. "Let's get our complaints out. Our issues need to be aired and then buried. Let's state them with feeling and then they are over." Paula listed her issues and then proclaimed. "Thank you! A new day is dawning. Who's in?"

Zelda jumped in and went along. She spoke with sincerity and passion that moved everyone then said, "That felt great. I'm ready to start fresh. Who's next?"

Camilla went next. She said she needed to clear the air. She told everyone about what happened years ago in England. "If I could do it differently, I would. However, I need you to know. I am sincerely sorry." She went on to talk about the human test tube babies. She shook as she spoke, "First they tested them on animals and I volunteered." Camilla broke down, regaining her composure and continued to speak, "They created three cubs for me in a test tube. However, when they informed me the cubs were not perfect, I asked them to terminate them." Tears flowed down her face. "I wish I had never done that. I could have loved those cubs.

They could have had a full life. I did not understand. Like I do now."

"Tell everyone why you didn't think the cubs were perfect," Rock said in a gentle tone.

Camilla stiffened. She came this far, there was no backing down. She looked directly at Max and said, "They were blind."

Everyone gasped. No one moved. Silence overtook the group.

The truth was out. It felt good to Camilla.

Rock came over and gave her a hug, followed by Max and Sophia.

Rock grasped the shovel and had his turn. He shared a side of himself the others had never seen. Tears were flowing from Sophia.

Harvey the hippo went to the centre, taking the shovel. He dropped it. "I-I don't know how to say this. I am gay. Have been for years. But never told anyone." He pulled a pink hat out of a bag, placing it on his head.

All cheered Harvey for being a brave hippo, leaving him in tears.

Harvey raised his head high. "From now on, I take pride in being gay!"

Percy, Edward, Tag and Max took a turn. Their energy was infectious.

Sophia took her turn. She admitted her spying secret and planting the Camilla article. Sincerely, she apologized for both. The team sat in shock. This was not the cool snake they knew. The new Sophia had so much more to offer. When Sophia was done, the first ones to cheer were Rock and Camilla.

Hal slinked to the middle of the group. He appeared uncomfortable and admitted, "I've a tough time showing my

true feelings. I lie so much I don't know what telling the truth is like." He went on to share a small personal fragment or two. He was shaken and exhausted when he sat down. Max clapped and the rest of the group joined in. That was the most genuine sharing that Hal had ever done.

Leanne was looking down as the group turned to her. Slowly, Leanne went to the shovel and began listing past issues and complaints with the team. She spoke with a monotone voice. Then Max asked her how she felt at that moment?

She replied, "Very empty. I guess I really suffer from blind ambition."

She confessed her bitter sibling rivalry with her sister that has totally consumed her. Leanne was spent emotionally. Then she talked about her son, Liam. Those who didn't know were surprised. Those that already knew were thankful that it was out in the open. The team praised Leanne for sharing.

Tag stood up for his second time. He delivered a passionate speech to the team. This was a true president. He was amazing. The entire group cheered loudly and went up and hugged him. Even Leanne and Hal got caught up in the moment, joining in the team hug. If Garth would have seen that, he'd be rattling their cages.

Max weaved them through the entire DREAM model, progressing them in the trust area. By session wrap up, the team became closer than they'd ever been. They'd begun to move closer to that conditional trust area. Max felt the executive team moved about as far as they could under the current conditions.

The board politics still hovered as a major obstacle hanging over the team. Except, it'd been neutralized with the executive team to a certain extent. But how hard would Garth work at smashing any progress? How much more would he

offer to smash the progress? Who could he further scare or threaten in this jungle game?

Max packed up as Hal slipped up behind him. “Glad that’s over.”

“Are we better off as a team then when we came?”

“I guess so,” replied Hal. “Never think about the team.”

“Are you still going to feed Garth damaging info?”

Max hit him right between the eyes with the question. Max’s almost none existent dream coaching sessions over the past months with both Hal and Leanne, proved to be an increasing challenge as Garth’s promises grew.

“Ah Max, I’ll chat with him a bit but only fun stuff. Garth’s a real party guy.”

Max said in a firm tone, “After what we all agreed to, I hope it’s friendly stuff. And you’re not trying to screw Tag and Jungle Tech. Since we’ve all agreed to cease the backstabbing in relation to the board, let the board have their power struggle. Let’s get it over with, and then Jungle Tech can go on.”

“I guess I understand,” Hal said with a smirk as he leaned back on his shorter hind legs.

“Understanding is one thing. Staying out of it is another.”

Hal snickered. “Okay Max, I’ll try to stay clean. But you know me.”

Max would never stop Hal. Except, maybe he could slow him down a little. Leanne was next on his list.

In spite of Leanne and Hal, the team was creeping closer to conditional trust. Someday, with a lot of work, and with the board politics gone, they could reach unconditional trust. And they would be on their way to loyalty.

Chapter 35 - Scrounging For Loyalty In The Jungle

A couple of days after the Jungle Island retreat Hal and Jack the jackal held another session at their favorite watering hole. Hal used a more serious tone in his voice on this occasion. “Jack, you’ve been of some use to me over the past few years. But your usefulness has wore out”

“But I’ve done everything you asked,” Jack defended.

“Almost everything,” responded Hal. “You didn’t get me any real dirt on the transformation team. And on top of that your sales results are awful. I can’t protect you any longer. As the real numbers are accurate and more public. Your days are numbered!”

“But I’ve been busy doing some of your dirty work. Rather than my job.”

“Excuses Jack. You’ve become a liability to me. Your credibility’s zero. Everyone’s got you pegged. I can’t be associated with you anymore. The movers and shakers in the jungle might think I’m a sleazy scavenger like you.”

Two weeks later there was a tiger that was attempting to change his image. Tag planned this evening carefully. He was more nervous than when he first met Tanya. He’d arrived home early and prepared her favorite dinner. He went all out, fine wine, candles and flowers.

Tanya waltzed into their dining room. She stared in stunned silence. “What’s this?”

“I prepared dinner, it’s your favorite. Hope you’re hungry.”

“Tag, I thought when you said we would spend some time, we’d be going to some social or business function with others around.”

“Just the two of us, like old times. Let’s enjoy dinner and talk. I’m learning how to listen. Well, so Max is telling me.”

Tanya paced about the room. “What do you want?” An awkward pause occurred and she blurted out, “Oh I know you just want to butter me up. So you can have those shares voted the right way. You’re worried I may side with Garth. That’s it. You’re just a con. So get lost.” Tanya headed for the door.

“Tanya, please stay. I assure you, I won’t talk business. The shares are important to me. I won’t lie, but it’s us that I am really worried about. If you want to side with Garth or sell the shares, then go ahead. But I want to give us a chance. I’ve focused too much on my work and ignored you too much. I didn’t listen enough. I’m trying to change. I hope and pray that I’m not too late. Am I?”

“I-I don’t know Tag, probably.”

“Can we spend some time together and talk? I’ll really listen. Please Tanya, just one dinner.”

“Okay, just one dinner.”

After some uncomfortable silence, Tanya and Tag relaxed. Smiles formed. Laughter flowed. The pleasant mood inspired the two to go back in time with respect to their relationship. Tanya enjoyed the attentive tiger.

“Tag, you’re still amazing in the culinary arts. Why’d you not keep it up? I enjoy this side of you.”

“That corporate jungle can rob a tiger of a lot of the finer things in life. Fell in a nasty trap, lost my balance. I love working hard. But I don’t have to be obsessive. I’m so sorry!” Tag’s voice was quivering as he carried on. “Tanya, you

know I've always loved you and have been loyal to you. But I just let the jungle consume me."

"Yeah, you've been loyal. It wasn't all your fault. I lived the good life with the money, the mansion, the trips, the cars and the club. I know you hate that club. I guess I fell into my own trap. You're trying to get out of yours. Don't know if I can get out of mine."

"I want to become more a part of your life. I hated that club and some of those phonies down there. But let's try to rebuild our marriage. We were such a great couple. We can do it. Let's start with a get away trip. Like a second honeymoon."

After a long pause Tanya whispered, "Tag, I need time to think. Just some time to decide. Sometimes I think it is too late for us. Then on a night like tonight, maybe there's a chance." A small tear began to form in Tanya's eye as she spoke, "Things have changed. I need time."

She needed to sort out the many trips to that grungy motel to hook up with Samson. She asked herself several times, why did she keep going back? Why did she lust after the scrumptious tennis bum? Why did she let that domineering Siberian tiger treat her like a submissive trashy tigress?

"Take all the time you want." Tag cleared his throat and said, "Tanya, I've prepared a little poem."

"Oh no," Tanya said and laughed. "You didn't. You used to write me poems back when we were first dating. They were so sweet."

"Here it goes." As Tag recited his creation with feeling, Tanya sat spellbound, not seeing him this way for years. That second and third tear formed in her eye, and then all the tears flowed.

Tanya's only response was, "Thank you, it is so sweet, so very sweet!"

They finished the evening with both having connected at a new level. Tanya felt confused. Tag knew what he wanted but not sure of where Tanya was going.

Tag's last words to Tanya were, "Thank you for tonight. It was very special. Oh, one last thing. I want to go take some tennis lessons. I want to learn the game that you love. I'll not be very good. But maybe at some point I could play with you. I'll even come down to the club and hang out with your friends. It'll be fun. Maybe Samson could give me some lessons."

Tanya cringed. She mumbled, "We'll see Tag." She leapt out of the room.

Chapter 36 - Jungle Decisions

Garth and Archie consumed a number of drinks down at the tennis club a week before the upcoming board meeting. Garth relished the thought of what he'd do to Tag and Leo at that jungle fight.

Archie grunted out, "I'm the strongest for the job."

Garth pondered the statement. "You've been useful to me lately. Though, I haven't made a decision on who'll replace Tag when I take control."

"See the power in me. I'll crush those weaklings back at Jungle Tech."

"One advantage of choosing you for President, is that I'll tell you what to do. You'll do it without thought or question."

“You bet boss,” grunted out Archie again. “There’d be no fancy talk of strategies and empowerment. All the power will be centered in one ape. I’ll do whatever you command. Those weak animals back at Jungle Tech will do what I say or else. And few birds will survive.”

“Interesting approach Arch, you’re making the decision on Tag’s replacement more difficult. Even our tennis star’s made some convincing arguments, why he has what it takes to jump from the tennis court to the President’s chair. After all, he’s done some excellent work for me off the court.” Garth and Archie shared a little chuckle.

“But Samson’s just a tennis bum. I’m your strongest outside candidate. Only good inside candidate within Jungle Tech is Leanne, and she’s too close to Leo. But I told you all about that.”

“I’ll make the decision soon.” Garth began rambling on about what a smart gorilla he was.

Archie fired a message to Hal. “I’m in the running for President.”

Hal responded with a message and an emoji of a hand shake. “Remember deal, I’m your #2.”

The next afternoon Edward the elephant slowed his car and shouted out, “Max jump in, I will give you a lift.”

“Thanks Edward.” Max found the door handle on the car and hopped in. He’d been returning to the office from an off site meeting.

“Max, you are the first to ride in my new auto. It is a basic automobile. I have disposed of all my luxury autos. My wife and I have made numerous lifestyle decisions lately. All part of our new life and financial freedom.” The two sped off.

“Rides smooth and feels real fine,” Max stated.

“That is what surprised me! How this basic auto is not that much different from my other autos, that carried an exorbitant price tag. Part of my financial makeover. We have relocated to a smaller home. It is quite cozy, and we adore it. We have done considerable cutting on numerous luxuries we did not need. Of course, I did not give up the polo club. As that is my passion. We will keep a few of our trips. However, we will not travel first class. I feel so invigorated by lifting that financial weight off my chest.”

“You sound so much happier.”

“Thank you for taking me through that Big Rocks exercise in the Reality Scan phase. It helped me focus on what was important both at work and at home. I am truly happy. I am living a simpler but more fulfilling lifestyle. Yet I have not abandoned anything that matters to me.”

“How are you and Percy getting along?”

“Famously! He is a champion fellow! Between the two of us we are making amazing strides in the technology area. We are much more decisive than in the past. With more effort, we can have everyone in the technology area operating in that manner. But Max, will the upcoming board meeting deliver any decisions that will upset our jungle?”

Two days before the board meeting, Paula the parrot flew into Max’s workspace and pronounced, “I’ve made a major decision. I’m going to university!”

“Wow! What are you taking?”

“Going to get my business degree at Jungle University. I’ve never had the confidence before. Finally made the decision. I’ll be taking the program at night and on the weekends.”

“Fantastic!”

“I want to thank you, Max. You’ve changed my life. You’ve given me the confidence to be decisive.”

Lester the lion cub heard the excitement, hurrying over to join in the conversation. “Paula, I hope we’ll run into each other on campus. After my long chat with Max and building my Life Map, I decided to head back to class.”

“Excellent,” yelled Max! “It’s turning out to be a day full of great decisions.”

After a few minutes of chatter Max’s office cleared out. His phone rang. His bubble was about to be burst. Gracie the giraffe whispered, “I have a very delicate issue to discuss with you.”

Over in the executive wing, Hal burst into Leanne’s office and shut the door, “Heard it from the grapevine that our tennis pal’s close to having control.”

“Really,” said Leanne, “I knew he would win in the end.”

“Garth’s waiting on a final decision. It’s sounding like a done deal.”

“I can’t wait for that board meeting Hal. Where Garth takes charge and strangles Leo, the king of the jungle. Then watch Garth declaw Tag as well.”

“Tag will finally be thrown out,” said Hal. “You’re the obvious choice to replace him. Except, that Archie has been all buddy-buddy with Garth. You never know. After all they’re practically brothers.”

“There’s no way it’ll be Archie. He’s just Garth’s big gopher.” Leanne held her head high. “I better get my acceptance speech ready, the moment is coming. I’m calling Garth right now. Of course, I’ll have to mention that Garth is such a wonderful gorilla. He loves to hear that stuff.”

Hal pumped his paw. “Yeah. You better get that speech ready. I’m gonna look forward to being your number two.”

Chapter 37 – Seeing Beyond

“That was a super celebration party,” Gracie shouted as Max walked by her workspace early in the morning one day before the board meeting.

“Gracie, you did a tremendous job organizing that function. What a blast and thank you for the gift. I was touched by the gesture.”

“And thank you Max for helping me with that rather sensitive issue.”

“You’re welcome Gracie.”

“I’m sure going to miss you and your dream coaching. You were the one that got my career going. This Vision Board you’d me create in my workspace really worked.” She built a colorful display reminding her of her dream and goals. “I can’t believe I’m going to move into Animal, Bird and Reptile Resources as my role when the transformation team ends. All part of my dream. I sure am lucky.”

“Not luck Gracie. It’s your talent and hard work.”

Camilla the cougar ran up to Max and gave him a big hug.

Max inquired, “What’s that for?”

With tears in her eyes, Camilla said, “I just got back from the vet. I’m going to have kittens. I am so excited!” Max and Gracie joined in her excitement. Camilla carried on, “I know I’m an older cougar. But the vet assures me all will be fine. Of course, my marathon running is on hold for now.

However, I am thrilled with the prospect of loving and raising those kittens. Now I'm off to inform my friends Sophia and Rock."

Half an hour later, Max cleaned up his workspace that he'd occupied for the last six months. Time flew by. Max thought how engaged he became in each assignment, and how difficult it was for him to depart. But it was time to move on. Jungle Tech was well on their way to tremendous success. If he stayed too much longer, they'd become too dependent on him. That wasn't good. They had the talent to go the distance. He was so very proud of them.

Early that evening Tag, Zelda, Max and the executive team went over the final presentation for the transformation project. It was impressive. The team that was presenting to the board sat ready and pumped. They built a fantastic transformation story. No one could find fault with that story. Unless the criticizer desired failure for selfish reasons. So, Max sent Tag and most of the other presenters home to get a great night sleep before the big board meeting the next morning.

Before Leanne departed she slid by Max's workspace for a quick chat. "Max, it has been interesting working with you. Oh sorry, that doesn't sound right. What I mean. It has been delightful working with you. As much as I did not think I would in the beginning, I learned a couple of things from you."

"Thank you Leanne! It has been equally as delightful for me. You've done a good job on your component of the transformation project. Good luck tomorrow!"

“Max, when I become a President of a company, you will be the first one I call.” Max heard a pill bottle in her hand.

“Leanne, please sit down. And please think about why you take those pills?”

Leanne began to run.

An hour later Max strolled on over to where the finance team burned the midnight oil. Max thought he smelled snake oil and smiled. He knew Sophia the snake would set them straight. He continued to contemplate Leanne’s statement. Who knew how long it would be until she attained her presidential dream?

Rock, Percy, an accountant from the old IVine, as well as Max took a last look at the details of the financial results. Max wasn’t much good in this area. Except, he knew enough to be dangerous. Max kept asking questions. The IVine financials still weren’t clear. Surprises kept occurring as they dove deeper into the numbers.

The third quarter financials were going to be presented to the Jungle Tech board tomorrow. Max wanted to account for every nickel they could. Desperately, he wanted to come up with as much revenue as possible to push them to the number one status. Jungle Tech was coming close to the current number one player in their industry. That player released their excellent third quarter results earlier that day.

The small team worked through the night sifting through the numbers, attempting to find the additional revenue. Jungle Tech moved even closer to their main rival. They sat just a fraction behind, but no cigar. They didn’t find the needed revenue to over take their primary competitor in this third quarter.

Max wanted to throw that on the table to shut Garth up. Not that it'd matter, Garth would never shut up. But for the team's sake, it'd be great. It'd have been like the chocolate ice cream on the banana split with candy sprinkles on top.

Finally, it was early morning when Rock put his hoof on Max's shoulder and admitted, "Max, we're all tapped out of ideas. It appears Jungle Tech's missed being number one by a fraction. We did the best we could, but fell short. I better go plug the final numbers into the board presentation."

"Too bad," said a tired Max. "We gave it a hell of a run. Nothing to be ashamed of. In tomorrow's, sorry, I mean today's board meeting, you're going to stand tall. This is a great financial story."

"Darn right," exclaimed Rock. "I want to thank you for everything Max. You and I've spent a lot of time together over the past six months. Wow! I really admire you. The way you operate without your sight."

"I can't thank you enough for being a true finance leader throughout this last six months. You're the one that's amazing."

"By the way, thanks for helping out Camilla. So glad that newspaper story came to light. It lifted a weight off her. I do understand she was doing what she thought was right. I've sincerely apologized for my actions."

"Atta boy, Rock!"

Rock grinned and spoke, "I'm seeing, hearing, and sensing Sophia in a completely different manner these days. She's shed her old ways. I really like the new Sophia. Even Camilla is raving about the new Sophia. I think it's time for me to muster up the confidence."

"Three deep breaths and then go for it," encouraged Max.

“Great advice.”

“Now we’ll show the board it was all worth it,” said a smiling Max. “After you plug in the final numbers let’s go get cleaned up and come back and nail that board meeting. Then it’s time for this monkey to move on.”

In the early morning hours at the club, Garth felt like a winner. He drank from a bottle and fired off a message with an emoji of a key to Sophia. There’s no way that slippery snake could wiggle out of his grasp he thought. “Meet me at Shady Lane Motel after board meeting.”

Also, Garth contemplated the selection of the next President of Jungle Tech when he’d be in control. It was almost here. He was so close. Removing Tag at today’s board meeting would be sweet. The late night drinks last night confirmed his choice.

Garth made the call. “Great time last night, you told me exactly what I wanted to hear. You’re the chosen one. You don’t have to tell me again. I know. I’m the best.”

Yes, this jungle has many large egos.

Chapter 38 - A Final Tiger Walk

Later that morning Tag came bouncing over to Max. His exuberance was apparent. “One hour to the board meeting where we show the goods. I’m pumped! Leo and I want you to sit in on the board meeting and listen to our transformation pitch. But first let’s go for one of those walks. Going to miss our working walks.”

“I’ll miss them too.”

“That was some kind of celebration bash,” said Tag. “I’m still laughing from when Gracie and Edward performed that stand up routine as co-master of ceremonies. They were so funny! Edward’s never been that relaxed and down to earth.”

“Hilarious! Everyone let loose. They all enjoyed themselves and earned the right to celebrate.”

The two headed out the front door chattering like two old friends which they’d become. When you have been through any major transformation project together, a tight bond can form.

Tag remarked, “I’ve gotten into this walking stuff. You got me hooked. Even run into some of my team. Harvey’s so dedicated, have you seen how fit that pink hat wearing hippo is? Wow! You know I come up with great ideas when I head out for a few minutes. What are we going to do without the Dream Guru?”

“You’ll do better then ever. I’m only a call away. But time for you and your team to fly solo. I become a liability after while.”

“But it won’t be the same Max.”

“Tag, you’ve broken through. You and Jungle Tech are on your way. Too bad, we didn’t find the extra third quarter revenue to push us over the top.”

“Yeah, Rock told me. Garth will use it to put a dagger in the transformation project. But that won’t stop me from telling the great story. Got any tips before you go? Besides the fact I must watch my back when I’m around Garth.”

“I can share my three Laws of the Jungle.”

“I want them,” demanded Tag.

“Here goes,” said Max with a smile. “Law #1 .”

Tag couldn’t stop laughing. Finally, he muttered, “What a way to send me into a board meeting? Now, I know I’m going to ace it with those three gems in my back pocket.”

Max responded with a serious tone, “Tag, it has truly been my pleasure. Thank you for letting this monkey be a small part of your success.”

As Tag and Max came to the front of Jungle Tech’s headquarters, Garth stepped out of his limo with Archie the ape opening the door for him. “Hi Garth, Hi Archie,” shouted both Tag and Max.

Tag carried on, “Great day for a board meeting.”

“You may not think so,” growled Garth. “You better be number one. Or you‘ll have hell to pay.”

“Number one,” grunted Archie. “He’s not even number one in his wife’s eyes. Never mind with this stupid company.”

Garth laughed and said, “Shut up Arch, but you make a great point. Let’s head up. I’ll make short work of this cat in the meeting.”

Tag’s face went red. His eyes focused. Between the look from Tag and a fierce aura radiating from Max, the ape and the gorilla froze. Archie looked straight down. Garth gulped and broke out into a perfuse sweat.

“Arch, be a good ape. You go first and carry my laptop up for me.” Garth shuffled right behind Archie who sheepishly led the way.

Tag stared intently as they went by. After they were gone Max said, “They’re just trying to rattle you. Don’t let them.”

Tag responded, “They sure want that showdown. They’ll get it.” The tiger began to laugh, “They were scared of my look, but they were more scared when they were looking at you. Now, what did you do to those two clowns?”

“Obviously my muscular physique.”

Tag roared with laughter, “Must be.”

“Now let’s go show them what you’re made of,” cheered Max.

As the two arrived at the President’s office, Tag cleared his voice. “I want to give you a little present. I know Jungle Tech gave you an official token of appreciation at the transformation celebration. But I wanted to give you a little something you’d remember me by. This is for all your help. I couldn’t have done it without you.”

Tag pulled out a brand new white cane. The cane was a traditional one. Except, it had gold plating on the handle and had diamonds strategically scattered throughout. It was extremely well crafted. The cane was a beauty.

Max felt the cane from head to toe. “Tag, this is a beautiful piece of art. Thank you! This is so very nice.”

Leo strutted in to Tag’s office and shouted, “Tag you didn’t give that monkey another weapon. He’s dangerous with those things. Somebody, protect me!”

Leo roared loud and claimed he was having the best day of his life. “Max something changed with Leanne. She’s no longer embarrassed about our son Liam. She’s letting him out in the jungle, rather than hiding him away. Liam the lipard is spending the weekend with my family. The whole tribe’s coming over to celebrate. Lester is planning the entire celebration. It’ll be spectacular. Liam is one beautiful lipard. He has all the positives of a male lion and a female leopard. He’s one of a kind. It is amazing how one mistake can produce something so beautiful.”

“I’m so glad,” Max said. “It’s better for everyone. Especially, for Liam.”

“For sure,” agreed Leo. “It’s as if somebody finally got through to Leanne.”

Max smiled and cleared his voice. “Thanks again Tag. I’m going to use this cane for the board meeting. I think it's going to bring us good luck.”

“We’ll need it,” said Leo. “Tag, got your message about us not finding the third quarter revenue to be number one.”

Sophia burst into Tag’s office. “Garth’s submitted a last minute agenda item. It’s under Other Business. He sent me a couple of slides to include. He’s calling it Showdown at the Jungle Corral. What do I do?”

“We’ll deal with it today,” Leo said. “It’s time, but first Tag, you and your team are gonna give us the Transformation story. The great turn around. Garth will throw out that bullshit about not being number one. Garth and I’ll fight after, but before we start swinging at each other, I want you to tell the amazing transformation story. That’s what’s important.”

“You bet,” agreed Tag.

Leo rubbed his paws together. “Tag, one last thing concerning that issue I talked to you about. Are you okay with it?”

“Absolutely, Leo.”

“We’ll announce it at the end of the meeting.” Leo double pumped his paw. “Okay let’s go get ‘em. Nothing like a good turnaround story before a good old jungle fight.”

They had a few minutes before the meeting commenced. Max, Tag and Leo proceeded to the board room following different routes. As Max went by Sophia’s desk he whispered, “Thank you Sophia for the heads up. You may have saved him.”

“Oh I hope so,” Sophia whispered back. “By the way, thanks Max for everything. And I mean everything.” Sophia smiled. “Yes! Rock and I are going out tonight!” She squealed like a little snake. “And for the first time in years,

thanks to your coaching, I'm taking no pics. I'm just enjoying being with Rock."

Max tried out that flashy new white cane. As well, he made two quick calls, the second to Gracie. Max ran into Archie in the hall as he sat there waiting for his next order from Garth. Archie was shaking. So, Max took a few minutes to calm the unsettled ape. Leo was having a quick talk with Zelda, while Tag was smiling and excitedly chatting with Tanya.

Right before Tag and Max were about to enter the board room, Rock and Sophia raced up to them. Rock whispered, "We found it. The additional revenue. Truly legitimate. The auditors would be fine with this. It was in the IVine financial mess. Sophia updated the deck. Here are the two key numbers." Rock handed Tag a sheet of paper.

Meanwhile Samson the Siberian tiger relaxed back at the club with his arm around one of his many adoring students. He'd a drink of vodka in his paw, and there'd be no lessons today. He thought life was finally going his way. Samson figured if things unfolded the way they should, he'd be a gold card carrying member of the tennis club by tonight. He'd no longer be a lowly tennis pro.

Samson sent a message to Hal. "As discussed, get ready to be my #2."

Chapter 39 - Showdown at the Jungle Corral

Tag beamed as he entered the board room with Tanya at his side. They laughed and touched as Tag escorted Tanya to

her chair. Tag felt positive their marriage had turned the corner. Tanya even crept into bed with him last night, which hadn't happened for ages. Tanya gave Tag a quick kiss on the cheek, followed by a lengthy kiss on the lips.

Garth glared at the two married tigers. He frowned when Max entered the room. Garth gave Leanne extra special attention for all to see. The room was packed with the entire executive team sitting in on this board meeting from the start. Leo brought the meeting to order. He conducted some preliminary business, proceeding to the heart of the matter.

"Tag, you and your team are on," commanded Leo. "Give us the transformation story."

Energetically, Tag kicked off the transformation presentation. He turned it over to Zelda. She proceeded to take the board through a chronological view of what unfolded. Then each of the executives presented their various areas. Tag chimed in at the appropriate time. This was the new Tag. Even Garth had to take a second look at Jungle Tech's President. Tag caught a hint of pride on Tanya's face as she listened intently.

The transformation presentation rated as a winner. Tag smiled from ear to ear. Leo pumped his paw several times, proud as punch, throwing in words of encouragement and praise at the appropriate points. Tag came through, turning Jungle Tech into a winner. Tag's team was becoming a force to be reckoned with.

The outstanding third quarter financials had been presented by Rock as part of the transformation project. They were impressive, beating all forecasts. Even Garth gulped. He'd not been given any preliminary results before hand. Garth thought he'd have to talk to Sophia about that. In addition to the fact, that she hadn't replied to his message about a Shady Lane rendezvous.

It was time for Tag to wrap up the transformation presentation. He blanked out the screen. “I want you to listen carefully to only two important numbers. A trick my friend Max taught me.”

First, Tag listed the third quarter revenue for Jungle Tech which was previously shown in Rock’s financial section of the transformation presentation. Next he spoke out their primary competitor’s third quarter revenue, who had been number one for ages. They were the only two key players now. Everyone knew that.

Jungle Tech’s revenue was higher for the third quarter. They beat all of their competitors. Jungle Tech ranked number one. The place erupted. The board gave the team a rousing ovation. Leo was caught off guard as Max and Tag didn’t have time to bring him up to speed. He was grinning from ear to ear. The board was grateful for what the executive team accomplished. The financials were strong. They’d outstanding revenue growth. A stock price that’d sky rocket, great news all around. All the executive team took a bow. Hal managed to sneak in a second one.

Tag spoke up one more time, “Again, I really want to thank this amazing executive team and all the wonderful staff for their hard work. I’m so proud of them.” Another thunderous round of applause broke out. “Also I cannot forget my buddy who has quietly changed our lives. We couldn’t have done it without the Dream Guru. A big thanks to Max!” There was more applause from the group.

Leo roared, “That’s my monkey, Atta boy Max!”

Garth raised his hands for quiet. “Nicely done, Tag and team. Although, the turn around’s impressive. That’s not what’s foremost on my mind. How about you sit down and let me get down to business?”

“What’s this all about?” Leo asked.

Sophia spoke, “We’ve come to the section of the agenda called other business. Garth had one last minute item called, Showdown at the Jungle Corral.”

“Wait a minute!” Leo thumped the arm of his chair. “You’re out of line Garth.”

The gorilla growled, “Shut up! You kitties are going to be taught a lesson.”

Leo progressed to whacking the table. This isn’t the time or place. We can’t do this. It can’t be done here. Meanwhile, Leo had given Sophia a pre-determined wink. She put Garth’s slides up on the screen.

Garth strutted to the front. “It can be done here. It will be done here. I have every right. I have the floor.”

Leo shook his paw at Garth. “You gave your word that if Jungle Tech was number one by this board meeting, you’d let it go.”

“I say lots of things I don’t mean,” said a smirking Garth.

“Why’d you wanna disrupt Jungle Tech when it’s on such a roll? You might actually make money on your Jungle Tech stock. That’ll be a first.” Leo knew the fight was coming and he enjoyed egging Garth on.

Garth held up his fist. “This is about power and control in the jungle.”

Leo leaned back in his chair. “Go ahead Garth, take your best shot. We know it has been coming. The executive team should leave. But what the hell. They may as well stay for the show.”

“And even better Leo! They may as well see who will be running this show. There’s a new king of the jungle about to be crowned,” boasted Garth. “I want to show a picture indicating controlling shares of Jungle Tech. Leo’s a grand

total of 48%. I, Garth the gorilla control 46%. Then there's the 3% controlled by Tanya. Finally, there's the 3% of stock owned by Triple Anonymous. This stock is basically uncommitted. As they're not represented."

Jungle Tech Stock"

-Leo the lion 48%
-Garth the gorilla 46%
-Tanya the tigris 3%
-Triple Anonymous 3%

Leo waved a dismissive paw. "Just add Tag and Tanya's 3% to mine. Then let's end this charade."

Tag affirmed, "That's absolutely right. Right dear?" He turned to Tanya?

Tanya lavished in this moment. She wanted to savor being the center of attention. She issued Garth a warm smile. She issued Leo a warm smile. Finally, she issued Tag a super warm smile. "Tag, you've truly changed."

Tag beamed.

Tanya winked at him. "But Tag, winds in the jungle have changed direction. Garth or shall I say soon to be Chair of the Board, please carry on."

Leo and Tag's faces dropped. The light bulbs flashed in their heads. They realized Tanya had pulled a fast one. She'd thrown in with Garth. Tanya legally voted the 3% which were rightfully both Tag and hers.

Tag pleaded, "Please-please Tanya. Don't do this. Let's talk."

"Tag, I'm putting my vote behind Garth. Fight for control is over! We're over! I am backing a winner," pronounced Tanya.

Tag pleaded one more time, “Please!” He couldn’t figure her dramatic change. Their declarations of love last night, their love making, all a sham.

Tanya shook her head. “No way! You’re way too late with respect to our marriage and you’re just not tiger enough for me. You’re done.”

Garth went on, “You see, between my 46% and Tanya’s 3%, we have 1% more than you Leo. We will take control of the board in short order. Historically the 3% of Triple Anonymous stock votes with the Chair of the board through a proxy. They always follow the Chair like sheep. They will follow me now like the foolish sheep they are.”

Tag’s head dropped. It was now buried in his paws. He’d been delivered a devastating blow. His wife’s betrayal. He thought they were turning it around, even up to the last minute. Clearly, she fooled him. Leo had a look of shock and let out a long groan.

“So cats, this showdown is over.” Garth pointed at Leo. “Leo, the cross breeder and creator of a circus freak, is out as chair.”

Leanne snapped at Garth, “Don’t you ever speak of my wonderful son Liam in that manner.”

Garth knew he’d crossed the line. But he shrugged it off. “To complete the grand slam, I’d like to introduce my choice for the new President. Or shall I say our choice for new President, Hal the hyena.” For a second Garth wondered just how many fools did he promise this job to? Archie caught on after he heard him offering the job to Hal. But Archie was harmless in the gorilla’s mind. The losers would have to get over it Garth thought.

Clapping and cheers broke out from only a couple in the room. The rest stared in shock. Sophia put a hand on Tag’s shoulder to comfort him. She realized losing his Presidency

was bad enough. Losing Tanya would crush him. This time she wasn't going to blow with the wind. She thought Garth can go to hell. He'd be alone at the Shady Lane Motel. She'd never go near that disgusting beast or disgusting place.

Leanne glared at Garth and thought what a clown he really was. Leanne knew she wasn't going to be offered the President's role after her last chat with Garth. Even though, Garth had been promising her all along. But he was using it to get something else. She couldn't stoop that low.

Garth's reaction when Leanne said she couldn't meet him at the Shady Lane Motel was, "It's your loss and you weren't getting the job anyway."

Leanne could understand why Garth offered it to Hal. They were both sleazy. Hal would stoop to any depths. Leanne was so thankful Max tried one more time yesterday to get her to see the light before she talked to Garth, or did something more then talk. It was a miracle she thought. She might attain her dream one day. But she was going to earn it the right way. Not on the terms Garth was demanding.

Hal must have gone behind her back. The same way she'd gone behind Tag's back. Sincerely, she'd apologized to Tag last night. She even called young Lester and apologized for how she treated him. Then Lester and her arranged the exciting weekend for Liam with Leo's family. She was sure glad Max raised the issue of doing what was best for Liam. She loved Liam and was proud of him. It was time to show Liam how much.

Garth spoke again with an even more pompous tone, "Upon wrapping up this meeting, Hal and I will be driven down to Channel 4 Jungle Business News. They'll be interviewing us on the amazing turn around we led at Jungle Tech."

Hal yelled out and pumped his paw in the air, “We were amazing Garth!”

Garth thumped his chest once. “Hal’s first task as President is to begin the effective break up and sale of Jungle Tech. Even though, most would say the breakup doesn’t make financial sense. It makes gorilla sense. So that’s what we’re going to do.” Garth pounded his chest twice. “I’m the new king of the jungle. I can use the money from the breakup to indulge in my pleasures.” He entered into a sustained chest pounding session.

“Down with the lion and bring on King Garth,” cheered Hal. “It’s also time for me to clean out all the executive trash.”

Chapter 40 - Cleaning Out The Jungle Trash

Meanwhile Max sat in the corner of the room. As the scene unfolded, he called Gracie and said one word. His plan would begin to unfold. No one noticed as he slipped to the board room door and opened it.

Gracie whispered, “Here she is.”

Max ushered in his guest. Found the far end of the table while the cheering from the select few was still taking place. Suddenly, he slammed his new white cane on the board room table. He shouted, “Showdown’s not over. We haven’t had the vote yet. There’s one more bullet in the gun. Garth isn’t Chair yet.”

It shocked the group and silenced the few cheers. Tag’s head popped up. Leo smiled and wondered what that monkey

had up his sleeve? Garth protested. Max hammered his cane down a second time even harder. There was dead silence.

Max spoke slowly holding the room's attention, "It is my privilege to introduce to you the 100% owner of Triple Anonymous. She controls the mysterious 3% of supposedly uncommitted Jungle Tech stock, that we're all so interested in. It's my beloved wife Mindy. Oh by the way Garth. I can assure you, Mindy is no foolish sheep."

Mindy spoke in her sweet voice, "Leo, you're in charge. I'm backing you. Together we have 51% of the stock. That means Tag you are still the President."

Garth began to rant and pound his fist on the table.

Mindy spoke and pointed her finger at the gorilla, "Garth you over grown baboon, button it. You've always been after someone else's lunch. Ever since we were in jungle school together. It's over."

Garth stared in shock. He began to bluster. One look from Mindy. He stopped. He was paralyzed.

Sophia saw the winds change again. She winked at Mindy and mouthed a, "Thank you!"

Leo stayed silent for a second. He began to roar with laughter, "You mean you two have been behind Triple Anonymous all this time? I love it!"

Tanya began to cry. She looked to Garth for support. But he looked as if he'd seen a ghost. Tag stared at Tanya. He felt beaten. Yes, he had Jungle Tech back. But he'd lost what was truly important to him. The jungle took its toll. Tag shook his head, thinking it was not worth it.

That permanent smile had been wiped off Hal's face. He was speechless and in shock. Except, Hal the hyena was a true scavenger. It was only a matter of seconds before he would be smiling and looking for his next opportunity to feast. He already said, "I didn't really want that Presidents job anyway.

Too much work and I’m happy with the money I’m making in my current job.”

Zelda whispered in Max’s ear, “You brat! You were waiting with the hammer all the time. Oh, thank you, Max. I’ll never forget how much you helped us.”

Hal slinked over to Leo, claiming he was behind him all the way. Leo was no fool. How long would it take Leo to deal with Hal in an appropriate manner? Even Garth’s flunky board members were patting Leo and Tag on the back. A crowd formed around Mindy. She stood as the new power in the jungle and a new player in the game. So, the other players would want to network with her. Although, that was not Mindy’s cup of tea.

Max listened to the moves. He listened to the posturing. The game went on whether you played or not. It never ended. That jungle stayed alive.

Max smiled and said to Mindy, “You were amazing my dear. Are you ready to leave this tea party and get back to our paradise? But for good this time.”

Leo roared with excitement capturing the room’s attention, “There’s one last item. I’ve recently purchased controlling interest in jTel. Along with my partner Triple Anonymous. I’m pleased to announce the new President of jTel will be Zelda the zebra.” That met with a roar from the team, the loudest coming from Max, Mindy and Tag.

Becoming the President of jTel was a big step up for Zelda. Tag gave her a big hug. He was proud of Zelda. Garth slumped in his chair a little farther. This stood as Zelda’s moment. For she was receiving the acknowledgement, she’d long deserved.This would open up the opportunity for another exceptional leader at Jungle Tech. Max knew Gail the gazelle would be offered Zelda’s old role as the executive in charge of the Sales and Solutions West area. Tag and he had

been planning for Leo's jTel announcement. No doubt Gail ranked as the number one choice to replace Zelda.

Garth marched over to Max and started in on him. "You blind monkey."

In a calm, soft, voice Max said, "I suggest that you announce your resignation from the board effective immediately. As I have five notarized documents. One implicates you in sabotage of the company. The other one on insider stock trading as you knew the stock would go up based on what we accomplished. Both these documents were provided by your friend Archie when he found out that you didn't choose him as president. The three others involve sexual harassment."

Max left the flabbergasted Garth and went over to give the Jungle Tech executive's a congratulatory hug. Max and Mindy gave Zelda and Tag an extra big embrace. It ranked as a memorable day for each but for different reasons. They made their polite farewells to others in the room. As Mindy guided Max out the door, Leo yelled, "Thank you Mindy! Thank you Max! Till the next time. Love You!"

Epilogue

Insight empowers the sightless.